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Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #8 08/00

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NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

Xbox: Microsoft's PlayStation 2 Killer

Behind the scenes with the
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game machine on the planet
(with never-before-seen screenshots)

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THE PC**

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- *Halo*
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- *C&C: Red Alert 2*
- *Max Payne*

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Previews of 7 new PS2 games
that will make your eyes bleed,
hands-on with Game Boy Advance,
Sony's surprising new hardware, and will
Dreamcast make it? — a special report

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Space Channel 5**

**PC/Vampire: The
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PSX/Chrono Cross



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Dreamcast ■ Nintendo 64 ■ PlayStation 2 ■ PC ■ Xbox ■ Dolphin

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BASEBALL 2K1**



Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING



A photograph of a field at dusk or dawn, with a dark, stormy sky in the background. Numerous wooden stakes are planted in the ground across the field. Some stakes have flowers or other objects placed around their bases. In the foreground, a baseball bat is planted upright in the ground. The text "SOONER OR LATER, PEDRO COMES FOR US ALL." is superimposed on the lower right portion of the image.

SOONER OR LATER,
PEDRO COMES FOR US ALL.



NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

The Making of Xbox

From early concept to major competitor—the complete story



X-men
The X-men franchise is a popular comic book series. The X-men are a team of mutant superheroes. The X-men are a team of mutant superheroes. The X-men are a team of mutant superheroes.

Microsoft's Xbox is the first console to be designed from the ground up for the 21st century. It is the first console to be designed from the ground up for the 21st century. It is the first console to be designed from the ground up for the 21st century.

The Xbox is a console that is designed for the 21st century. It is a console that is designed for the 21st century. It is a console that is designed for the 21st century.

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■ **Sega**
On the rebound or on the ropes



■ **PSone**



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■ **Halo**

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■ **Neverwinter Nights**

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Does Sony have a clue?
Can Nintendo's Yamauchi
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Special

Cover Story

The Making of Xbox. Next Generation goes directly to the source for the exclusive, inside scoop on Microsoft's powerhouse entry in the console wars.....64

Plus:
20 Games That Will Save the PC. Who says PC gaming is dead? We profile a full score of games that show otherwise.....74

08/00



EDITORIAL

In search of America's Console



I grew up (this fact alone is questionable) in Massachusetts, where every history teacher from grade one to grade eight seemed intent on beating you over the head with the details of the Battle of Bunker Hill, Paul Revere's ride, and the of Boston tea party. We still worship these revolutionaries; these few heroes who found the courage to stand against many in order to change things for the better. Rebellion and revolution are American traditions. We love rooting for the underdog. Yet to associate Microsoft with the role of the underdog would seem ludicrous to most. But the story of Xbox is a story of four rebels who faced down an entire organization hell-bent on proliferation of PC-based products, to put together a radically forward-thinking game system that has already changed the landscape of console gaming. For the complete, behind-the-scenes story with the team who put this bold plan in motion, turn to page 64.

Still, some would argue the real American underdog is Sega of America. Despite those who said the company would never recover from the Saturn debacle, the U.S. has been the world's strongest supporter of Dreamcast thus far. But is the interest of the U.S. market enough? And what is Sega doing to ensure its own survival? We have the answers to those questions on page 6.

So, while you're escaping the summer heat at the X-men movie or Mel Gibson's *The Patriot*, don't forget that real, living revolutionaries are sacrificing their summer weekends and putting it all on the line to bring you the next greatest gaming experience. You'll only find their stories in the pages of *Next Gen*. Although, who knows? Someday they might make history.

Tom

Tom Russo
Editor-in-Chief



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As all things must end,
so must we

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A photograph of a man in a locker room, sitting on a wooden bench. He is shirtless and looking directly at the camera with a concerned expression, his hand near his face. In the background, another man in a white shirt and cap is working on a tennis racket. A third man in a dark jacket and glasses is visible on the left. The setting is a locker room with wooden lockers in the background.

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Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING



→ News

Game industry news and analysis





Despite strong U.S. Dreamcast sales during the last year, every month there's a new rumor-bred report that Sega of America is about to be acquired by Microsoft, or that its Japanese bosses are about to shut down the whole operation. One recent report even went so far as to suggest that Sony would be buying out Sega's assets. These rumors are fueled by the fact that Dreamcast continues to under-perform in Japan, and its parent, Sega Enterprises, continues to hemorrhage large amounts of yen. But does this mean Sega is teetering on the edge of oblivion, or does Sega of America have the firepower to come fighting back?

HOW BAD IS IT?

Sega Enterprises had sold a total of 2.1 million Dreamcasts in Japan since the system launched in November of '98. (In comparison, Sony moved one million PlayStation 2s in March alone.) For the '99 fiscal year, Sega sold roughly 950,000 Dreamcasts in Japan — 150,000 units short of the company's forecasted sales. Sega posted a 42.88 billion yen (\$398 million) loss for fiscal '99 — slightly less than the 43 billion yen (\$400 million) lost in fiscal '98.

But sluggish Japanese Dreamcast sales are not the only reasons for the red ink. Sega attributes much of the loss to the high costs of launching the Dreamcast in North America and Europe. The yen's steady appreciation against the dollar in 1999 didn't help either, diluting the value of the revenue Sega brought in from the U.S.

However, red ink is normal early in the life cycle of a console, and many of the same impediments to profitability will weigh heavily on Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft. Sources in Japan told the Nikkei news service that Sony will likely lose \$100 or more on every PS2 it sells over here, due to the cost of the system's high-powered components.

Still, considering Dreamcast's strong sales outside Japan, Sega Enterprises was hoping for better news. Bloomberg financial news reported that Sega has moved 2.5 million Dreamcasts

■ DOWN THE SWIRLING PATH

SEGA

On the Rebound or on the Ropes?

The Dreamcast has been a success story in the U.S., but Sega of America's Japanese overlords are still bleeding yen. The question on everybody's mind — will Dreamcast make it?

In North America between its launch on September 9, 1999 and March 31, 2000. In the same time, Europe accounted for another 1 million units, bringing the worldwide total up to 4.65 million Dreamcasts.

IRIMAJIRI TAKES THE FALL

Lose \$800 million in two years, and someone has to go. At a Tokyo news conference on May 26 announcing the financial losses, Sega Enterprises president Shoichiro Irimajiri announced that he would step down from the job of president, but remain vice chairman and will pursue development of new console technologies. In his place, chairman Iao Okawa has assumed the hands-on duties of president. Okawa has been the source of much of the capital keeping Sega moving forward.

While naysayers were busy pointing to Irimajiri's demotion as further proof Sega is in trouble, Okawa unveiled a series of company-wide structural changes to aggressively stimulate more innovative videogames. Sega's in-house design teams have been broken off into independent units to spur more creativity and accountability. Although the AM2 team that is handling Shenmue retains its name, the other nine studios have been renamed to reflect their change in status (see sidebar). The newly autonomous design teams have been charged with creating original videogames like Samba de

Amigo, Space Channel 5 and Seaman — experiences other companies can't duplicate.

"Sega is definitely in a tough spot in Japan," says Gartner Group senior analyst PJ McNealy. "But you can see how they intend to proceed in that market. Irimajiri [who started his career as an engineer] is going off to work on new tech

options for the Dreamcast. If you look at how Sega spun off Sega.com here in the U.S., you can see that the guys in Japan are serious about pursuing new business options beyond videogames. I think we'll see more of that in Japan as well."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SOA?

No division likes to see its parent

"You can see that the guys in Japan are serious about pursuing new business options beyond videogames"

— P.J. McNealy, Gartner



■ SHOICHIRO IRIMAJIRI

posting heavy financial losses, but Sega of America Chief Operating Officer Peter Moore says there's an overemphasis placed on coverage of Sega Enterprises in Japan.

"Financial results, and press coverage of them, from the Japanese market have very little impact on our North American strategy," Moore says. "Sega.com and SegaNet have a firm capital commitment from Okawa-san, and we're expecting to continue growing our Dreamcast business here."

Confidence in SOA's long-term future is also shared by many industry analysts that specialize in following the videogame industry.

WATERSHED REORGANIZED
Following the reorganization of Sega's game studios into independent business units, most of them took on new names.

OLD NAME	NEW NAME
AM1	Wow
AM2	AM2
AM3	Hi Maker
AM4	Amusement Vision
AM5	Sega Rosso
AM6	Smile Pit
AM7	Over Works
AM8	Sonic Team
AM9	United Game Artists
Wave Master	Digital Media

"I don't think that the changes in Japan should have a major impact on Sega of America's strategy," says David Cole, president of research firm DFC Intelligence. "My expectations are that Sega may focus substantial effort on the U.S., as success in this territory could help carry the entire company. Remember, the Genesis was a major success mainly in the U.S. When a game hardware system becomes a success in a territory as important as the U.S., it is very profitable."

And what about Irimajin stepping down and Okawa taking on a larger role? Moore says no problem. "Mr. Okawa makes the final decisions on our strategies here, and now he will be a step closer to us, which should make getting approvals on new projects easier."

HERE COMES THE COMPETITION

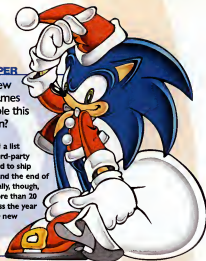
This fall Sega intends to steal some of the media spotlight focused on the PlayStation 2. The company will position Dreamcast as a system that redefines videogames, based on SegaNet's new way to play console games. Only time will tell if Dreamcast owners want to build a community on SegaNet, but Quake III Arena, Phantasy Star Online, or NFL 2K1 and NBA 2K1, are a few of the more anticipated titles.

Sega still intends to make plenty of Dreamcasts available to consumers not interested in online play, with an abundance of new games available this holiday season. With only one million PS2s to last between Oct. 26 and Dec. 31, it's possible that all available

HOLIDAY HELPER

How many new Dreamcast games will be available this holiday season?

■ We've compiled a list of 83 first- and third-party releases, scheduled to ship between August and the end of the year. Realistically, though, we're thinking more than 20 of these might miss the year 2000. Still, with 60 new titles, everyone should find something they like.



"Sega Enterprises is betting on the U.S. becoming its lead market ... here is where the money is."

— Michael Goodman, The Yankee Group

units may go to pre-orders, leaving none for parents trying to purchase them as gifts. It's those disgruntled consumers that Sega hopes to draw to Dreamcast. Barring up those overtures could be as many as 83 new Dreamcast games scheduled for release between August and the end of 2000. (At press time 16 had confirmed dates.)

OUR DIAGNOSIS

So will Dreamcast make it?

"Sega Enterprises is betting on the U.S. becoming its lead market," says Michael Goodman, senior analyst at research firm The Yankee Group. "They're not going to ignore Japan, but here is where the money is. Sega of America is

taking advantage of the opportunities available to it — setting up the differences between the Dreamcast, the PS2 and the Xbox. And where they have a chance to succeed is going after the low-price, entry-level business that Sony and Microsoft won't be able to compete in for a while."

This coming holiday season will ultimately determine the success of Sega's strategy. If SOA can move plenty of Dreamcasts with its \$200 Sega.com rebate, and keep those people playing progressively more games online via SegaNet, then the company should be back on track to making money and silencing critics. If it doesn't, it's anyone's guess as to where Sonic will next appear. — George T. Chronis

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

➔ **Ah, summertime.** The heat forces us into our basements, makes us break out our lousy pools, and drives game companies into one another's arms. The end of June is a key tax and fiscal reporting time, making the summer the season of the merger.

To whit, fresh from Barnes & Noble's purchase of itself (the company's founder and CEO,

Leonard Riggio, purchased his own Babbages Etc. last year), B&N has grabbed the Funco line of stores, giving it an enormous presence in all the finer strip malls around the country. This comes after a bidding war between B&N and Electronics Boutique for Funco (prisoners were taken, though no shots were fired). Of course, since the e-commerce generation never buys games at boring old "stores" anymore, it may be a pyrrhic victory at best.

Rumored around the world is the impending purchase of Mattel Interactive. Now being written off as a fail by Mattel (which must be a terrific morale booster), Mattel Interactive's non-Barbie properties have been on the sales block for months. The two leading contenders in the rumor mill are Infogrames and Hasbro. Of course, if something is for sale in the games industry the purchaser is always rumored to eat stinky cheese, will

wine, smoke Gitanes, and wear a beret, so we're taking it all with a grain of salt here at News Bytes.

Speaking of mergers, buyouts, and other dangers of the high seas, Microsoft is out with its bejaying pens and cutlasses with the Jolly Roger flying high. Recently, employees of Electronic Arts, Konami, Acclaim, Midway and Bungie Software have all indicated to News Bytes that a Micro-merger is

Sony Unveils More Hardware

Sony shows it can make 'em small and cheap, and square and bulky at the same time

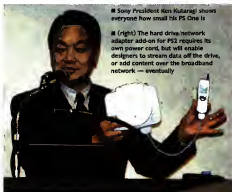
On June 8, less than a month after Sony announced that the U.S. version of PlayStation 2 would sport a hard drive/networking bay, SCEI president Ken Kutaragi rolled out the external hard drive add-on that would be used with existing Japanese PS2s.

Dubbed the "HDD," this external unit connects to PS2 using the Japanese model's PCMCIA slot, and features its own power supply. Once again, exact specs were conspicuous by their absence, and no mention was made of price or availability. Phil Harrison of SCEA has said the drive's capacity would be in the "tens of Gigs," and there is a current, odd rumor that Sony may offer two or three versions (10GB and 40GB models are the numbers most often floated), but actual storage size was not officially announced. The unit also does not contain its own modem, just an Ethernet socket for connecting to an external cable, DSL, or wireless modem.

At the same press conference, Kutaragi also unveiled PS One, a smaller, more "mobile" version of the original PlayStation. At roughly a third the size, the unit also requires an external AC adapter.



■ PS One is more portable (although not any cheaper) than an original PlayStation, although the pictured LCD screen won't be available until spring 2001



■ Sony President Ken Kutaragi shows everyone how small his PS One is

■ (right) The hard drive/networking adapter add-on for PS2 requires its own power cord, but will enable designers to stream data off the drive, or add content over the broadband network — eventually

(which, actually, would help alleviate PlayStation's legendary overheating problems). PS One will have shipped in Japan by the time you read this (mid-July), priced at ¥15,000 (\$140), or roughly the same price, in Japan, as the old PlayStation, and will be available in the U.S. in September, likely priced at the same \$99 as current domestic PlayStations.

Accessories for the tiny behemoth include a 12-volt adapter for connecting to an automobile lighter, a cell phone cable for connecting to a mobile network (which plugs into a controller port), and, by spring of 2001, a portable

LCD screen. Sony has no plans to market PS One as a "hand-held," so there are no plans for a battery pack — which would likely be quite expensive and not last long in any case. — Jeff Lundrigan



imminent. Most of those are just rumors, though. For the full scoop, see this month's feature (that's the big article later in the magazine).

File it under "peculiar bedfellows." Jesse Jackson has entered into the fray of game companies. SonyBoy, a company that produces an MP3-playing cart that plugs into the Game Boy, has been sued by Nintendo for producing it without a license. The company is

minority-run, and Jackson has come to its defense, stating, "The African-American community is a great supporter of Nintendo's products, with the GBC unit selling to at least 65 percent of African-American households. We would hope that Nintendo would welcome a partnership with an African-American company." Jackson went on to reveal that if you push "A, B, A, B, Start" in *Zelda*, you can see Link naked.

And the results are in on the "New News Bytes Laughing Stock" contest. As readers may recall, for the past 16 years, News Bytes has been making jokes about *Dalitzana*. Now the game is out, and there's no point joking about it anymore. We asked you, the readers, to suggest a new target for our jokes. Sadly, you all responded "Team Fortress 2." We don't really see what's so funny about Team Fortress 2, but we'll give it a try.

That's all for News Bytes for now. We'll see you next time, when the summer will still be sweltering, companies will still be buying one another, and John Romero still won't be done making Team Fortress 2.

None, just not as funny as jokes about *Dalitzana*.

— Compiled by Aaron John Loeb, Executive Producer, *DailyRedaction*

■ PORTABLE PREVIEW!

An off-the-record glance at Game Boy Advance

Our intrepid reporter gets a sneak peek at Nintendo's next hand-held

→ Game Boy Advance (AGB) is the perfect name for Nintendo's next-generation handheld game system — its technology represents a sizable "advance" over past handheld systems and it is pure Game Boy, an ideal system for playing the simple two-dimensional games that always seemed natural on Game Boy and Game Boy Color.

Unlike the original Game Boy, AGB will be held in both hands, horizontally, like Lynx or NeoGeo Pocket Color. It will have the standard Game Boy controls, but Nintendo is also building left and right shoulder buttons into the top of its casing.

In power and design, AGB falls somewhere between Super NES and Nintendo 64. In fact, Nintendo created an AGB version of the N64 game *Yoshi's Story* as

a technology demo of what the hardware can do. On AGB's 2.9-inch screen, the AGB version of *Yoshi's Story* looks remarkably similar to the original.

Nintendo also released a short video clip of a Seattle Supersonics basketball game to developers, in order to demonstrate AGB's ability to handle full-motion video. While the spectators get very blurred in this demo, the overall clarity of the clip is very impressive. It will never replace DVD, but you could never get FMV of this quality on Nomad or NeoGeo Pocket Color.

While Nintendo has built in and expanded the Mode 7 capabilities of Super NES, this system is clearly meant to play 2D-style adventure, puzzle, and fighting games. This does not mean, however, that clever



■ If you were expecting 3D games for Gameboy Advance, don't get your hopes up. The system is more of a high-powered 2D machine, capable of playing a modified version of the N64's *Yoshi's Story*.

designers will not invent ways to expand AGB to play 3D games — it should be remembered that *Doom*, *Castle Wolfenstein*, and *3D Super Noah's Ark* all made appearances on Super NES, and AGB has a more powerful processor.

Nintendo's decision to

continue in 2D may well have to do with the limitations of portable screens. Although AGB's screen is bigger and has higher resolution than Game Boy Color's screen, it is a bit small for handling all the details that go into 3D games.

— Steven Kent

SMUGGLER'S RUN

RELEASE DATE: PlayStation 2 Launch

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM

PlayStation 2



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光速危險死



悪魔達はover 100 miles of highway上で
他者の安全も省みずにレースをする。



 Hundreds of opponents から逃れる事は不可能だ。何故なら彼らもまた strong competition を持っているからだ。



危險死

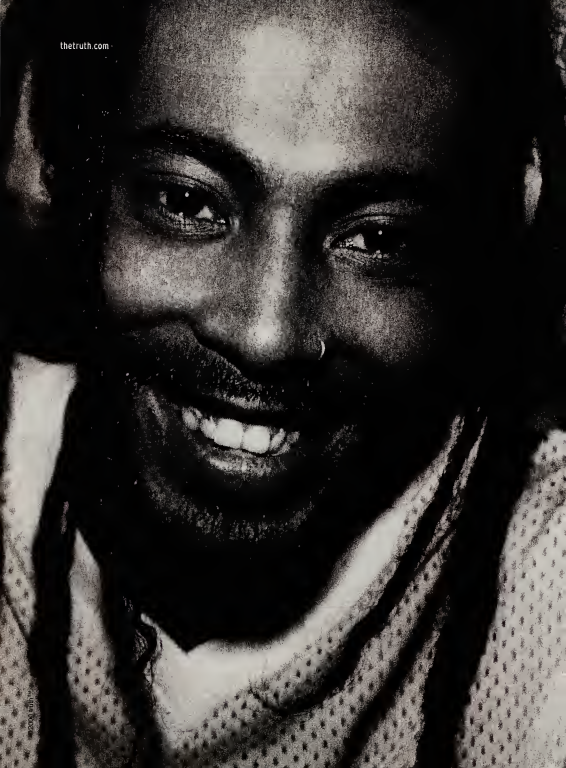
この脅迫者達は自分達を ultra-super cool だと信じて疑わない。彼らはその持てる力の限りを尽くし闘う。Emperor of the Streets の名を手に入れる為に。

速度

路上にたむろする
流浪の一群は名誉ある
シンボルをcreate and
edit logosする。彼らの
忠誠心はこのシンボル
しかshareしない。



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Of course, only rip out ads from magazines you've purchased yourself. Thank you.

The X-philes

Anti-aliasing on Xbox: Sony's problem isn't necessarily Microsoft's

→ Anti-aliasing is an essential graphics tool that improves appearances of games and experiences for the player. And if it weren't for a number of PlayStation 2 games that failed to utilize the technique, nobody would have given it a second thought. But it brings up the questions: Will Xbox support full-scene anti-aliasing? Seamus Blackley, manager of Microsoft's Advanced Technology Group, is adamant that the feature won't ever be an issue for the Xbox. "It's actually really simple," Blackley says. "Things look really great without jaggies, so we made it a hardware design requirement to have really fast, film-quality anti-aliasing built in to

our graphics part. That also means that you get anti-aliasing in reflections, shadows, etc. It can also be applied in a lot of ways to dramatically increase image quality."

Anti-aliasing isn't even a vague, general improvement in the way that, say, a higher resolution is. It has specific aesthetic functions.

"It's especially important as you get into scenes with lots of geometry," Blackley says. "Remember that textures are now easy to filter. The old days of 'pixelation' are gone, but the edges of models, especially smaller things like wheel spokes or car grilles, look terrible unless you use anti-aliasing. So it turns out to be an important feature as we start to increase the complexity of scenes to the level

Jaggies, however minor, simply serve to remind you that this is a videogame

that Xbox is capable of."

The Dreamcast Usenet groups have had a field day with Sony's anti-aliasing problems, but Microsoft's system, debuting in

2001, will likely skip the whole argument. It'll also skip the potential consumer-adoption debacle of providing otherwise essential equipment (Hard Disk, network adapter) as an add-on. Blackley won't be drawn on Sony's failings, but he does say, "I do think that the kind of image quality that we are aiming for in Xbox, with the anti-aliasing and all the other features, will raise the expectations for how things look, and will end up making life difficult for developers who can't use this technique for whatever reason."

So what's the big deal? At the very heart of this is the game industry's fundamental need to suspend your disbelief. Jaggies, however minor, simply serve to remind you that this is a videogame. Sony's insistence that this is merely a teething problem for its system doesn't hold water. The first batch of games has a duty to show the system's potential — not its weaknesses. Sure, the anti-aliasing problem may indeed go away, but for the system to ship a year after Dreamcast with software that has rendering flaws is inexcusable.

While it's cool that Xbox will ship with full-scene anti-aliasing, it is frankly no more impressive than it shipping with sprite capabilities, or controller ports — it's a feature that damned well better be included. The system is being designed to output great graphics in every department — a high-end DVD player, support for HDTV, and probably VGA. If full-scene anti-aliasing were not included, for whatever reason, it would be disastrous. Let's hope Sony gets it too, and quickly fixes the problem. — Frank O'Connor

Editor-in-Chief, Daily Radar Consoles

EXACTLY WHAT IS FULL-SCENE ANTI-ALIASING?

Christopher Donahue, manager of nVidia's Developer Relations Group, explains how it gets done on NV25 hardware:

"Our hardware renders multiple samples for every pixel," Donahue says, "and filters these samples for the final, resultant pixel in hardware. This smooths the jagged you see from lines and edges at lower resolutions or on displays that don't support blue-ray imaging."



■ These shots, captured from an Xbox development system, show the new ubiquitous robot demo rendered with full-scene anti-aliasing.





■ Korean ministers cut the ribbon and subsequently toast the first annual GAMES, a government-sponsored show designed to foster videogame growth and development

■ WHEN GOVERNMENT GETS IT

Games Find a Home with Seoul

South Korean government sponsors computer game trade show

→ When it comes to games, U.S. politicians range from cautious spectators to open enemies. Not one single American politician has spoken out in favor of videogames, and state legislators in Florida, Arkansas and Oregon have openly called for laws banning violent arcade games.

In contrast to the gaming paranoia that seems to permeate American politics, lawmakers in South Korea are actively welcoming the game industry. In April, the South Korean government sponsored GAMES 2000 — very likely the first-ever government-sponsored computer game trade show.

Held in Seoul's Yido Exhibition Center, GAMES 2000 was so small that the entire show would easily

have fit within E3's smallest hall at the Los Angeles Convention Center. But as the Korean government has already committed \$10 million toward funding future shows, in the coming years GAMES will most likely grow at a very fast rate.

As interactive entertainment shows go, GAMES 2000 was pretty dull. Most of the exhibitors were showing Pump, a blatant rip-off of Konami's Dance Dance Revolution. In fact, the most interesting product at the show was an industrial-strength dance floor peripheral made of durable plastic for an on-line dancing game. Manufactured by Joy N System, this product has the lights and cool design of an arcade machine and sells for \$200.

But it wasn't the products that made GAMES 2000 interesting. It

was the government's participation. Ji-Won Park, minister of culture, and Byung-Up Ahn, minister of information and communication, opened the show at a ribbon-cutting ceremony. After cutting the ribbon, they toured the floor. This would be the equivalent of Janet Reno and Donna Shalala attending E3 in the United States.

Dae-jung Kim, president of South Korea, was originally scheduled to give the keynote address, but could not break away from reunification talks between North and South Korea long enough to attend the show. According to Soon Tae Park, director of the game and music industry division of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Korean government pledges to allocate \$500 billion (approximately \$500 million U.S.) toward creating a game-developing infrastructure.

"There are many different ways of offering financial support," said Park. "We have a government fund of \$500 billion that will be available through 2003. This money can be given as loans or funding for companies or towards starting education programs."

We can only hope the progressive attitude that led to such a program will eventually catch on with the notoriously technology- and entertainment-fearing government that runs this great nation.

— Steven Kent



■ No Pac-Man costumes, but as in any video game trade show, there were several lively costumed characters and spokesmodels to capture the crowd's attention

truth
TOUR DATES

SEATTLE, WA	JUNE 26-28
BOSTON, MA	JUNE 26, 28-29
PORTLAND, OR	JUNE 30-JULY 1
DENVER, CO	JUNE 30-JULY 2
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Dolphin Watch

08/00

The truth is out there ... somewhere ... no, really

→ Theoretically, all will be revealed on August 25, when Nintendo unveils Dolphin and Game Boy Advance at Tokyo's Space World. But until then, Nintendo continues to play the Smoking Man from *The X-Files*, shrouding Dolphin information in the utmost secrecy, only revealing minute details when

absolutely necessary. The company line has not changed: Dolphin and Game Boy Advance will be shown at Space World, and not one word until then. (Although we do have a hands-on report on Game Boy Advance, page 10.) And so Next Generation goes behind-the-scenes once more to bring you what developers

are saying in the darkest corners of Nintendo's resting army.

Survey says

The next several months are critical for Nintendo. The company is already late in the game, bringing its Dolphin system to market a year after Sony's PlayStation 2 hits retail shelves. Nintendo hasn't shown any playable soft-

ware and, in fact, hasn't even revealed all the specifications for its next-generation console — something even Microsoft has done already. Everything is resting on Space World and NCL knows it. The good news is that the company's legendary game designer (and newly appointed board member), Shigeru Miyamoto, recently toured the U.S. and Europe, checking over everything the second parties are underway with. According to the parties he visited, he was very impressed with what they presented, especially from a visual standpoint. Assuming Miyamoto's own software will be ready in time, Space World will indeed take place this August without delay.

Size doesn't matter

During E3 of 1999, Nintendo announced it would be using a "proprietary DVD format" for its next-generation console, and no one at the firm has spoken on the issue since. We've done some investigative work, however, and picked up a few new details on the copyright functionality of the drive. According to several sources close to Nintendo, the Dolphin will play smaller-sized DVDs than the norm — comparable in shape, in fact, to that of a mini-disc. The DVDs will not come in a caddy, as was previously speculated. It is also rumored that the discs could be semi-transparent, and as an encryption function, Dolphin might actually identify the laser color as it reads the disc. While it is currently impossible to validate these rumors, we find them intriguing all the same.

— Matt Cosomossino

Editor-in-Chief, IGN64.com

The Wrath of Yamauchi



→ Nintendo of Japan's president, Hiroshi Yamauchi, recently spoke to the Japanese press about Dolphin and Game Boy Advance. In keeping with tradition, he also took a stab at the competition. The best of his comments are summed up below:

"[The Dolphin] will have a function to access the Internet"

"We are entering the market as a latecomer so the console will have to outperform Sony Corp's PlayStation 2"

"We are planning to introduce an Internet business next March or April. The first step will be online sales of a brand new type of Pokemon cards"

"If we release software for the [Dolphin] console similar to what Sony has for PlayStation 2, that would be a failure"

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■ BRING ON THE TOYS OF SUMMER

Take me out to the ballgame — so I can play Dreamcast

Sega moves games into San Francisco's Pac Bell Park

➔ In a move that we can only hope will inspire more videogames in places we haven't seen before, Sega of America has teamed with the San Francisco Giants to create "Sega

Sports at Centerfield." This massive demo arena gives gamers/ballpark attendees a chance to check out Sega's latest sports titles from the relative comfort of the Giants' new

Pacific Bell Park.

Five gaming towers — huge, secure kiosks that each house four Sega Dreamcast units, can be found near the restrooms and concession stands directly beyond the center field wall. Each kiosk is already running the latest Sega Sports titles, including NFL2K, NBA2K, and the upcoming World Series Baseball 2K1. All games will be playable free of charge, and Sega also informed us that, due to Pac Bell Park's close proximity to Sega's North American headquarters, it is entirely possible that new titles could be playable at the park before hitting store shelves.

The complex will remain open for the duration of every Giants home game, and additional hours of operation are under consideration. One tower will also feature a 5' x 5' closed-circuit screen with live coverage of the real-life Giants action, for those who wish to get their ticket's worth without giving up the controller. — Eric Bratcher



■ This isn't some abandoned corner of E3, this is Sega's new sports kiosk at San Francisco's Pac Bell Park, just a couple of hours before it opened to the public



■ Why not head out to the ballpark for a little time at the rink?

■ 3000 MILES FROM HOME

Serious Sam stuns websurfers

Can a Croatian garage shop Out-Texas the Texans?

➔ Ever since *Doom*, Texas has been the capital of first-person shooters. But a small team

in Croatia can change all that. The CroTeam (www.croteam.com), previously known only for some 2D Amiga games, has released its playable compatibility test for *Serious Sam*, a new shooter running on the team's new Serious Engine, and the results are impressive.

The engine itself seems very nice, but the real thrill is playing the game itself. Unlike so many post-Quake shooters, it's not dark, you aren't always stuck in corridors, and there are tons of baddies on screen at once, including a brilliant kamikaze

enemy that provokes the first real feeling of fear in a FPS since *Doom*. The demo levels are set in Egyptian temple, there's some nice double-texturing to avoid res-out (basically a small sandstone texture is laid over all the walls, which works great with the Egyptian theme), and the puzzles, while traditional, don't feel too clichéd.

There's no word on when the final game will be done, or which publisher will pick it up, but if the final product can capture the magic of the demo, publishers are advised



■ A PC shooter that isn't dark... who knew it could be done!

to start bidding now. Anyway don't take our word for it, check it out for yourself. The demo can be downloaded from www.dailyradar.com. We'll have more news on the game as it becomes available. — Chris Choro



■ It was too late to include in the feature, but you can file this under "the other game that should save the PC"

In the Studio

Development news as it develops

ROBOTECH REBORN

→ Insiders at Mattel Interactive have indicated that they have secured the Robotech license for games developed for next-generation systems. Japan's popular animated series based on (fun you guess!) giant robots is commonly known to industry veterans as the license that destroyed Gametek. The small developer/publisher struggled for years with a Robotech game for N64 that never made it to shelves. At press time, our sources at Mattel did not have any developers or specific titles linked to the deal.

SNK GOES HOME

→ In what the company calls "a move to regroup and reevaluate its worldwide marketing strategy," SNK abruptly ceased distribution of NeoGeo Pocket Color hardware and software in the U.S. and Canada. The company has also stopped domestic distribution of all Dreamcast and PlayStation titles. Ironically, the perceived collectible value of US versions of SNK titles could mean copies of King of Fighters series will sell for the first time in about six years.



■ KING OF FIGHTERS DREAM MATCH '99

ID: DOOMED TO REPEAT ITSELF

→ id Software's John Carmack has confirmed the developer will turn its attentions back to the single-player game experience with its next project — a new Doom game. Why the move back into single-player game development? "Several factors," Carmack states in his plan file, "including a general lack of enthusiasm for the proposed plan, the warmth that Wolfenstein was met with at E3, and excitement about what we can do with the latest rendering technology, were making it seem more and more like we weren't going down the right path." —It's safe to say Carmack's move to Doom is welcome, but major shareholders weren't as enthusiastic about revisiting the Doom franchise. However, Carmack had enough support from id's employees that the matter became an ultimatum. The shareholders capitulated, and deal is work his since begun on the game. However, in what Carmack claims was a retaliatory gesture, id's Phil Stood was fired by the shareholders. Life ain't easy at the top. Still, we can't wait for a new Doom.



IS MIDWAY READY TO THUNDER?

→ Word on the street has it that Midway's coin-op group is planning a turbo-charged snowmobile racer called Arctic Thunder, which should be going on bid as soon as August. While Midway has cut back the number of new arcade releases, it's unknown what is going to happen with Hydro Thunder 2, its Lead Programmer and Designer Steve Rine (also responsible for the original Hydro Thunder, shown here) has recently left the company.



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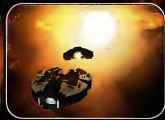
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→ Alphas

Next Generation cuts through the hype and brings you the hottest upcoming titles

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48 ■ Seven Blades



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■ Billabong Pro Surfing

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■ PLAYSTATION 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2

■ Publisher: Koei ■ Developer: Koei ■ Release Date: Launch ■ Origin: Japan

Reunite a nation by decimating the enemy army — by hand, one guy at a time



Koei is a company long known for its crushingly meticulous medieval war recreations (namely, its *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* series, now in its sixth iteration). But that all changed when the company released the surprisingly engaging one-on-one fighter *Dynasty Warriors* for PlayStation. *Dynasty Warriors 2* takes Koei a giant step further down a road less traveled. This free-roaming, beautifully 3D, "tactical action" game might be the best test of man-against-the-horde since *Final Fight*.

Set during the same period in Chinese history as *RT3K* (the era of the Three Kingdoms, a 30-year period of civil war that began around 221 A.D.), the game bears a resemblance

■ All of the characters in the game are actual war heroes from the era, but their moves, stances and special attacks are straight out of the *Cipcom* school of design.



→ Alphas



Horses are not only fast, but they also enable the player to climb through the enemy ranks like a hot ball through a string of porcupines.



resemblance to Koei's other PlayStation 2 title, the strategy simulation *Kessen*. All similarities end there, however. While there are strategic elements (important ones, at that), *Dynasty Warriors 2* is all about melee, specifically the idea that if you want somebody dead, you'd better kill them yourself. To do this, you plunge directly into battle as one of nine historically inspired, devastatingly fierce warriors, the kind of hero who can withstand wave after wave of

enemy attackers, inspiring courage in those around them.

It is during these heightened battles that the game plans to blow you away. The plot will differ depending on which of the three kingdoms you represent, but each kingdom can achieve victory by winning only five battles. Only five? Yes, but these are not your typical "all-these-little-guys-are-fighting-all-these-other-little-guys" strategy battles. This



■ This stage takes place during a snowstorm, so we assume the whiting out of the characters is to emulate the vision-less real soldiers would experience in these conditions

REAL MEN, MYTHICAL WARRIORS

Like King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table, the heroes in *Dynasty Warriors 2* are all real warriors whose deeds have been embellished into legends over time. For instance, the battle now of the savage Zhang Fei is said to have caused a river to reverse its flow. However, this pales in comparison to the transformation of Guan Yu, a formidable, yet human, general who has evolved over time into Guan Di, a deity invoked to avert war, drive away evil spirits, and bring good fortune to merchants. His church even spread to Japan and Korea during the 17th century. Lancelot never pulled that one off.

is the glorious chaos of full-scale war, with huge battlefields that sprawl over one square kilometer and feature a full two to three thousand soldiers battling it out with sword, staff and arrow. Imagine fighting one of the battles in *Kessen* using a character from *Soul Calibur*, and you'll begin to get the idea.

The beauty of *Dynasty Warriors 2* is that the game is going one step further than less ambitious 3D hack-and-slashers like *Gauntlet: Legends* and *Sword of the Berserk: Guts' Rage*. You are one man, true, but you are also the key to your army's success. As the battle rages all around you, it will become clear that you are not just any soldier, but a true master, and both your own forces and the enemy will react to this. If you fight skillfully, lesser enemy soldiers will begin to run from you, and friendly troops around

■ Each character will wield his own weapon fully flavored in his life, but will also carry a bow and arrow for ranged attacks



you will fight better, encouraged by your prowess. The enemy commander may even take notice and send his own champions after you for a true showdown. According to Producer Takazumi Tomoike, this perceived morale has an enormous effect on the flow of battle. "No matter how many people you have with you," Tomoike says, "if they're all duds, they can be beaten by a few strong opponents. However, if you play brilliantly, your forces' morale will improve, enemy morale will decrease, and the duds can take over the world."

As in the real world, this greater power comes with greater responsibility. "The player has to be aware of the overall flow of battle," Tomoike explains. "Not only must he defeat the enemy in his sector, but at times he must rush to another sector to help, improving the morale and hence the performance of those troops as well. Also, if his commander is in trouble, he must jump onto his horse (yes, there are horses!) and fight his way there to save the day!"

This is where the strategic aspect of *Dynasty Warriors 2* comes into play. And while the goals of each stage are simply stated ("Capture the enemy commander!"), only those with a sound



■ There are nine selectable warriors initially, but an additional 19 can be unlocked, so expect to be busy for a while

battle plan and well-honed tactical awareness will be able to accomplish these deceptively basic objectives.

"In one stage," Tomoike says, "your commander is in a highly exposed position, making him the object of enemy attack. With this handicap, you must still rally your forces and survive enemy attack until help arrives. In a different stage, you are seriously outnumbered. Unless you are able to trigger a special fire attack, you probably won't win. You have to find out what will trigger that event and

then protect certain key individuals to fulfill those conditions."

Of course, there have been 3D action games before, but none has balanced its 2D arcade roots with the epic feel and strategic elements Koel is incorporating into *Dynasty Warriors 2*. This may not be the most anticipated PS2 launch title, but it certainly boasts the kind of cross-genre creativity that gamers expect and deserve from the next generation of gaming.

— Eric Bratcher



■ Each army can be over 1,000 soldiers strong, with 30 to 40 combatants onscreen at any given time. This is the kind of fighting we've been waiting for



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■ In certain time periods, technology such as this lighter will seem like magic, and can be used to impress (or frighten off) suspicious villagers

■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

SHADOW OF DESTINY

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami** ■ Release Date: **Q4 (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

There's no blood and no combat — but it's still a race to survive



According to Junko Kawano, the director of *Shadow of Destiny* (and the only female game director at Konami), her game works just like any other big adventure of the last four years, with a couple of interesting

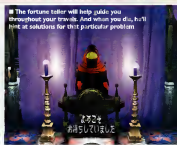
twists. "As in *Resident Evil* or *Silent Hill*," Kawano explains, "you control the lead character in a 3D environment that you can explore freely. Now, the most original point is, there are no battles. Most of the game is based around puzzling situations

that the player has to solve. And to do this the hero must time-travel."

Yes, time-travel — that's the big hitch. *Shadow of Destiny* (not unlike the first *Legacy of Kain*) begins with the death of its hero. Your character is stabbed in the back before you even press a button. The only way forward is, well, backwards. And that's the idea.

"A man named Eike is killed," explains Kawano, who came up with the initial concept two years ago. "Someone stabs him from behind, and he doesn't know why. Eike's soul arrives in a strange place where a mysterious man, a kind of fortune teller, tells him that it will be possible for him to go back through time and prevent his death from happening. Eike is then transported back to Earth 30

■ The fortune teller will help guide you throughout your travels. And when you die, he'll hint at solutions for that particular problem



THE SHADOW KNOWS...

Right? Haski, mad scientists and other menaces was all in a day's work for the cloaked crime fighter known as The Shadow. Using his two automatics and his telepathic ability to "cloud minds," The Shadow helped keep evil at bay. Created in 1931, this popular pulp hero has appeared on radio and TV, in novels and comics, and even in several feature films (the most recent of which starred Alec Baldwin).

■ This is how the game begins — you're stabbed in the back and left facedown on the pavement to die





■ The team is experimenting with a wealth of different camera angles to give the game a cinematic mood and feel

minutes before his murder"

And the game goes on — except that each time Eike manages to evade one death sentence, another looms up to take its place. Eventually the player must travel to four different time periods — 1500, 1900, 1980 and 2000, to unravel the mystery of Eike's identity and prevent his untimely demise once and for all. In some respects, it's a puzzle game — a sort of reverse whodunit: at each stage the player simply has to figure out how to prevent Eike's death. Gozo Kitao, the



■ Don't expect to get against time to prevent,



le in any one period, because you're always in a race

game's producer and the manager of KCET (which just worked on *Silent Hill*), chimes in: "It's important to note that the player doesn't have much time when he's walking around each town. He has to prevent the death of his character from happening, so he will have to focus on this issue. Believe me, he will have to use the time wisely!"

The designers haven't approached the whole time-travel issue lightly either. The problem with time travel is that it creates paradoxes," Kawano points out. "For example, introducing technologies too advanced for a specific period would provoke very strong reactions. Using a lighter in 1500 would terrify people — they would think the fire was coming

from your hand! And, of course, if you change something in the past, it will have direct consequences on the future."

So, unlike the current crop of adventure games, this is a puzzle-based adventure with an emphasis on thinking rather than simply surviving. Also, unlike say, *Resident Evil 2*, the gaming structure is rather open — there are multiple endings (one big one, apparently, and several lesser achievements), so there's significant replay appeal. Even without that, Kitao and Kawano promise "several dozen hours" of play time.

Could this be a sign of things to come? Games that offer dense plotting, very specific set pieces, decent characterization and interesting, involving storylines? We'd like to think so. Based on the evidence we've seen thus far, the developers of *Shadow of Destiny* certainly intend on proving it can be done.

— Nigel Edge

In some respects, it's a puzzle game — a sort of reverse whodunit: at each stage the player simply has to figure out how to prevent Eike's death



■ Just because there's no combat doesn't mean that the game won't have any tense moments. Next Generation expects many of the scenes leading up to your deaths to be quite intense

Deadly Bear

Put Teddy on the most endangered species list and **FUR FIGHTERS** on your most wanted. A new kind of game has hit the scene. Part adventure-crammed shoot 'em up, part heavy petting and panting action. Play as all six armed animal liberators against the malevolent fat-cat, General Viggo. It's a raging romp of feline conspiracies, blazing animal combat and unrelenting beaver shots!



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■ Although combat is turn-based, it appears each attack is rendered as an in-game cinematic (note the depth of field blur on the farmland)



We've heard of iron fists in velvet gloves, but this is ridiculous

THE VELVET FILES

Although we're as confused by the title of this game as anyone, that's almost par for the course. Despite the fact that the fabric is smooth and mellow (or maybe because of that fact), over the years it's been associated with some odd stuff. There was Lou Reed and the groundbreaking Velvet Underground through the late '60s and early '70s, and let's not forget Eddie Murphy's primo pimp, Velvet Jones, on *Saturday Night Live* by the early '80s. The name was picked up by Velvet Jones, a London-based indie-rock band (and also an unrelated

Florida-based cover band — go figure). And who could forget Blue Velvet, David Lynch's hardcore look at a small town's seamy underbelly, or the video for Alanis Hays's "Black Velvet" (now she knew how to fill out a pair of chaps). Of course, Black Velvet also refers to a drink made from equal parts Guinness Stout and champagne... a mixture that's been known to cause genuine pain.

→ A new variation for all you fans of Square's *Front Mission*, *Velvet File* (and no, we don't understand the title either) is a turn-based mech combat game. Some time in the near future, a civil war erupts in Tokyo after an attempted coup. It's your job to take control of the government forces and slap down the rebellion.

Much of developer Dazz's efforts are going into a painstaking re-creation of many of Tokyo's more famous districts, including Shibuya, Shinjuku, Odaiha, Haneda, Ochanomizu and the Parliament area. There will be eight basic styles of mechs, of which you can choose a squad

of four for each mission. Moves are divided into three basic categories: simple movement, move plus attack, and "technical" attack. A fog of war exists, and if a mech detects an enemy during its movement and move plus attack has been selected, it will fire according to its armament and programming.

Naturally, each basic style of mech is completely configurable, enabling you to switch out heads, torsos, arms, legs, weapons, etc. Also, there are various bonus items within the missions to be found, as well as upgrade paths available for every aspect from weapon systems to tactical software, the latter of which is roughly analogous to the "Skills" in

Front Mission.

The game is divided into five stages, and by beating them all, you open a "Life Mode," which generates random maps and mission objectives. Plans are also in the works for some kind of Versus mode, although the details were unknown at press time.

If Dazz is actually offering this as a competitor to *Front Mission*, the developer certainly has its work cut out for it. However, since the game will be the first of its kind for PlayStation 2, it will at least be larger, prettier and crammed full of special effects. This may well be enough.

— Christophe Kagotani/Jeff Lundgren

■ Once a mech's movement has been decided, it acts according to its programming and the skill of its pilot — naturally, this means that every aspect of the machine is fully customizable and upgradeable



■ Tokyo has been painstakingly re-created in 3D as accurately as possible, including places like the airport in Haneda



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I IS GONNA BITE
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■ Conker meets an endless assortment of unusual characters, including the most belligerent pitchfork in the world



■ Let's see, there's a bull, and a whole bunch of lady cows. We shudder to imagine how Conker might get out of this one



■ Yep, he's doing what you think. You know a better way to douse a flaming enemy? Conker was a huge hit at E3, but few parents will find themselves relieved by its humor

■ NINTENDO 64

CONKER'S BAD FUR DAY

■ Publisher: **Rare** ■ Developer: **Rare** ■ Release Date: **Christmas 2000** ■ Origin: **UK**

Shield the kids' eyes, because Pikachu never did anything like this



If Nintendo's typical action-platformers are like a trip to Disneyland, Rare's latest 3D adventure is something like a guided tour of EuroDisney led by Itchy, Scratchy, and Quentin Tarantino on an all-peyote diet. Basically, Conker is the stereotypical bright-eyed, bushy-tailed cartoon squirrel who dies (but not really), meets the Grim

■ After taming a dinosaur, Conker is confronted by an enormous, Homer Simpson-looking caveman. However, the giant has a vulnerable area right about the same height as the dino's head. Ouch!



Reaper, and ends up in a strange world where everything talks (money, bees, bales of hay) and nothing comes easy. We asked Rare to explain exactly where Conker is, how he gets there, and what his ultimate quest is.

"The plot is groundbreakingly trivial. It involves a table with a missing leg, a glass of milk, some duct tape, and a squirrel-shaped thing. You can guess the rest."

While our unnamed informant didn't exactly solve the mystery of the ancients, this comment summarizes the attitude of the game: irreverent, sarcastic, and creative.

"What we've tried to do is create a believable world, where each character has a reason to be there, getting on with his or her own thing, (however strange this may be), and along comes Conker, doing whatever he does (usually innocently messing it up for them). The structure is not just a case of 'Finish Snow level, fight giant snowman boss, get big sparkly thing... finish Jungle level, fight big monkey boss, get big sparkly thing... ad nauseum.'"



■ Here's a look at the deathmatch mode. Rare has confirmed that there will also be additional controllable characters in the single-player game, though who (and what) they'll be is anybody's guess

Thus, the player will find himself picking fights with a talking pitchfork, urinating on flaming enemies, and head-butting a giant in the groin. Conker is neither sophisticated nor subtle, but with Sony's repositioning of PSX (ah, excuse us, PS One) to appeal to a younger demographic, he may be just what Nintendo needs. — Eric Bratcher

→ Alphas

■ NASCAR 2001 promises to get 20 racers on the track — all with their own AI and racing style — and still maintain a 60 fps frame rate

■ PLAYSTATION 2

NASCAR 2001

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: Electronic Arts ■ Release Date: November ■ Origin: US

NASCAR racing like you've never seen it before

→ While the EA Sports NASCAR series has been a staple on consoles for years, the team behind NASCAR 2001 admits that former console adaptations of the sport have been held back by the technological limitations of the hardware. That's not a problem this year, because EA is going all out on PlayStation 2 with the goal of

creating the most exciting presentation of the sport yet.

What makes NASCAR 2001 so much better than its predecessors is the new level of detail it can process. Now, with the addition of advanced AI (each CPU racer has an AI routine based on one of the 33 licensed drivers) and advanced physics, the game plays more like a real

race with drivers forcefully jockeying for position and rivalries rearing their heads — along with spectacular crashes.

Associate Producer Trevor Jallowitz explains exactly what kind of feeling the team is attempting to capture. "We really wanted those NASCAR highlights and Days of Thunder type moments with big wrecks," he says. So, unlike previous versions of the game, cars now roll, flip, catch fire and break apart believably. If you've watched Days of Thunder and wondered what it would be like to enter a field of smoke with burning cars all around, guided solely by the spotter on the radio, this will be your chance to try

The game also caters to those who want to do more than just run laps. "There are full car setup options," says Product Manager David Lee. "If you want to change your wedge or drop a few pounds on the left side you can do it."

While NASCAR may not be every racing fan's dream, EA's latest stock car emulation finally seems poised to pump some adrenaline into what has frequently been a dry home experience.

— Blake Fischer

THE DAYTONA 500

One of the biggest additions to this year's edition of NASCAR is the world famous Daytona International Speedway — home of the Daytona 500. This popular race is the first of 34 in the Winston Cup Circuit and consists of 200 2.5 mile laps (500 miles total, get it?). Curiously enough, this famous track has been unavailable in the past due to Sega and the Daytona series of games.

■ Hit a car hard enough and pieces will go flying — this is how rivalries start between drivers



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- DailyRadar.com



Machines: PS2 Publishers: Activision Genre: Action # of Players: 2 Release date: Summer 2000



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Japanese illustrator and music by the original Chrono Trigger composer, Chrono Cross features visuals and sounds that bring its magic to life." — DailyRadar.com



Mechanics: Fun. Publisher's quality: Excellent. Price: 1 of 5 players. 1. Release date: August 1999.



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TENCHU 2

BIRTH OF THE STEALTH ASSASSINS

天誅二



Medias: PS2 Publisher: Activision Genre: Action
of Players: 1 Release Date: August, 2000



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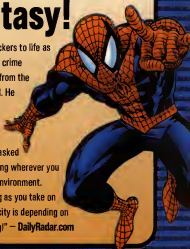
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Machine: PS2. Publishers: Activision. Genre: Action. # of Players: 1. Release date: Summer, 2002.



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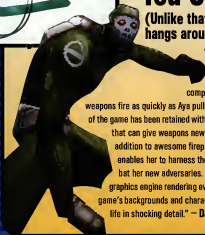
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"Aya Brea returns. With a fully revamped battle-system, Parasite Eve 2 now takes place completely in real-time. Automatic weapons fire as quickly as Aya pulls the trigger. The customizability of the game has been retained with realistic weapon enhancements that can give weapons new and improved capabilities. In addition to awesome firepower, Aya's "Parasite Energy" enables her to harness the power of the elements to combat her new adversaries. With the enhanced graphics engine rendering every detail, the game's backgrounds and characters are brought to life in shocking detail." — **DailyRadar.com**



New "Parasite Energy" enables Aya to combat her new adversaries.



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■ PC, PLAYSTATION 2

PROJECT EDEN

■ Publisher: Eidos

■ Developer: Core Design

■ Origin: UK

■ Release Date: Spring 2001

**No more Lara Croft (for now)
— but this team of mercenaries
won't let you down**



It's fitting that *Project Eden* was revealed just after *Core Design*, the creators of *Tomb Raider*, moved to new curvy-walled,

purple-carpeted, steel-framed premises. Even the choice of the word "Eden" is surprisingly appropriate, not least in the respect of starting fresh after Lara. In an idyllic creative wonderland, ironically, it's the *Tomb Raider* franchise that has given rise to

Project Eden's lofty ambition and scope. Where Adam gave a rib so that Eve could exist, Lara has lent *Project Eden* her wallet.

Set in a future where skyline monstrosities dominate the landscape and the rich occupy the highest levels, the atmosphere of *Project Eden* is the antithesis of its biblical counterpart. Core is still being cagey about the narrative and overall goal of the game.





EDEN: THE FALLOUT

You've heard the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but what of Lilith? According to Jewish myth, Lilith is actually Adam's first wife (created from the dust of the ground along with Adam), but she was booted out of the garden for her streak of independent thinking. Some versions also blame her for wet dreams (as she takes men as they sleep), and as the origin of all vampires. In modern times, the image of Lilith has come to represent the independent female; she's even been used to promote events, such as the Lilith Fair concert.

However, with the evils of genetic manipulation playing a major role, it wouldn't take a great leap of the imagination to see the plot focusing on some kind of sinister organization trying to fashion a future equivalent of Eden. The four heroes at your disposal are part of an urban police force sent out to rid Project Eden's dystopian environs of scum and villainy. From these clichéd beginnings the team promises that the plot expands, evolves, and compels.

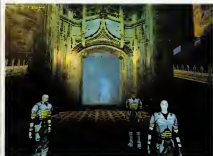
The four characters have varied abilities and, while other games have incorporated similar concepts, Eden differs by having all four characters exist within levels at the same time. They are a typically varied bunch: Carter is the leader and is a good all-rounder, able to use various weapons; Minoko is a female computer expert able to hack into terminals and door locks; Andreas is an engineer, so he's naturally good with machinery and communication devices;

and Amber is a hefty, somewhat slow robot with excellent armor and the ability to withstand harsh environments. The gameplay and puzzle-solving dynamics these assorted characters introduce should ensure that Project Eden isn't just another wannabe Half-Life. In fact, thinking is as high a priority as shooting for the Project Eden team.

If this futuristic A-Team of mercenaries somehow fails to impress, the list of devices and gadgetry they can use may win you over. A rover device, for instance, is a six-wheeled vehicle that you can



■ The Jack-on Camera allows players to fire one way while running another. Very handy.



■ Eden's architecture ranges from the classical to the ultra-modern

negotiate through small apertures. The gameplay possibilities with this one device alone are immense. Say a science laboratory is contaminated with unbreathable chemical fumes and Amber, your robot, is either incapacitated or too unwieldy to enter the complex. If you still have a rover you can drive it through the harmful gasses to release a switch or collect an object that vital to your quest.

Your team also has plenty of special weapons, including mines, hovercams, and *Aliens* Special Edition-style sentry guns (which you can place to protect areas). Despite offering an eclectic array of features, Core is keen to imbue Project Eden with an unusual brand of integrity. For gadgets to work convincingly within the gameworld, they need to be fully



■ In Project Eden you can trust no one. Even an innocuous bum can morph into a hideous monster



■ Team management plays a big part in Project Eden — making sure you have the right people in the right places for the right puzzles

incorporated into the framework of the gameplay. Using a rover for one puzzle early on and then discarding the concept for shooting action later is not on the Eden team's agenda.

The sinister premise of DNA manipulation also gives the team a wide berth with the enemy designs. "Having the ability to morph characters because of their genetic make-up gave us lots of scope for experimentation," enthuses animator Stuart Atkinson. After viewing one particular enemy onscreen — a vicious dog similar to those seen in *Resident Evil* — Next Generation was not, at first, particularly astounded. But with a quick movement of the mouse, the image alters and, in realtime, the dog transforms into something even Steven King wouldn't want to write about. The prospect of the dog rushing toward you, then gradually morphing into a Lovecraftian nightmare, is an unnerving and exciting prospect for any gamer

Humans, too, devolve into weird and gruesome monsters. "This one," notes Atkinson "turns into a four-legged spider that spits out smaller spiders from between its legs." A few other members of the Project Eden team laugh nervously

The tension factor has also been taken into account. Rather than going for the stealth approach, Core has opted instead for elements of surprise and races against the clock. While some enemies will be conspicuous, noticing others will require due diligence. For example, at any moment an innocuous bystander walking towards the player may suddenly transform into one of Core's genetic monsters and rush your team.

Providing gamers with fast action, some complex puzzle solving, and more than a few moments that will surely make them jump, Project Eden may finally be Core's first breakout product worthy of standing alongside the *Tomb Raider* franchise.

— Nigel Edge

■ The game can be played from either a first- or a third-person perspective. Both views present advantages in different kinds of situations



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Mild Animated Violence
Mild Language

PC

BATTLE REALMS

■ Publisher: Crave ■ Developer: Liquid Ent. ■ Release Date: Q2, 2001 ■ US

Can Liquid's commanding first title conquer RTS gaming?

■ Combat in the game will be a sight to behold. Each unit has roughly eight different attack animations, and will maneuver to take a strategic advantage, such as attacking from behind or from a higher elevation.

→ While the Command & Conquer series has taken some lumps lately for its lack of innovation, it remains the best-selling RTS series of all time. Ed Del Castillo, producer of the original C&C and C&C: Red Alert, recently co-founded his own development house, Liquid Entertainment. Liquid's first project, a Japanese fantasy-based title called *Battle Realms*, looks to lift RTS gaming to the next level of realism the same way the original C&C did.

"We try every day to remind

ourselves why we got into this business," Del Castillo relates. "We're trying to re-create those same epic moments people were trying to re-create with 500 miniatures in a sand box." He also refers to pen-and-paper games in a manner that is reverential. Liquid is making every effort to create the type of immersive, lifelike experience that p&p games perfected long ago, but that computer RTS games have thus far been unable to deliver.

The world of *Battle Realms* is ruled by four major clans: the heroic Dragon Clan, the sinister Serpent Clan, the noble Wolf Clan, and the mysterious, necromantic Lotus Clan. Each clan boasts 12 different units (often capable of evolving into their clan's namesakes), as well as unique heroes, monks, and ninjas. Each unit has several attacks, including special moves and range-specific adjustments (for example, an archer will lock enemies who are too close to shoot.)

While the units are undeniably creative, the game's true appeal is its p&p-inspired devotion to creating an entire living world for the game. In addition to developing a deep, complex history Del Castillo has



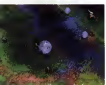
■ Fire will spread among combustible structures, and is actually used as a weapon by certain units

insisted on creating believable battlefield interactions, which have been woefully unrealized by today's RTS titles.

"Why is it that the forest is always impassable?" Del Castillo demands. "You should be using it to sneak up on your enemy." To this end, forests in *Battle Realms* are living, traversable locations. When units move through the trees, birds will take flight, giving away the units' location. Archers will be useless against enemies in the forest (due to arrows' arching trajectories), but musketeers will

■ Boulders can be rolled through the battlefield with devastating effect. When they come to rest, they can be fired upon to inflict flak damage on the enemy

■ Structures build up as well. For example, a higher level training facility will turn out archers who can see farther, shoot more accurately, and do more damage



→ Alphas



■ Environments are subtly beautiful, and are rendered in a colorful style that's clearly influenced by classic Japanese art

■ Even idle units have an effect in the *Battle Realms* universe (right). Peasants left idle in the fields will talk shop, resulting in increased rice production. Idle geisha girls will dance, providing a temporary hit point boost to nearby soldiers, and swordsmen will sharpen their swords, thus dealing greater damage during battle

still shoot with precision, and cannons, with their larger blast patterns, will inflict much more damage on trees than the enemy. Each tree is independently modeled, so players may opt to completely raze the forest, improving their forces' line of sight.

According to Del Castillo, this level of realism "isn't genius. It's common sense," all part of the "living world" philosophy that permeates *Battle Realms*. Set fire to an enemy building, and the fire will spread to nearby combustible structures (unless units are assigned to douse it with water). Horses can carry any unit, and if you shoot an enemy off his horse, it is then yours to steal. This focus extends to your units' AI as well — a lone unit facing two enemies will attempt to even the odds by killing the

"Why is it that the forest is always impassable? You should be using it to sneak up on your enemy"

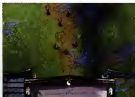
— Ed Del Castillo

more vulnerable foe first, rather than just attacking the closest.

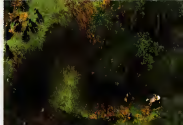
Then there's resource management. "What you see these days is not realtime strategy; it's realtime economy!" Del Castillo fumes. "We want to push RTS back onto the battlefield." There are still a few ultra-practical resources (rice; people, who can be trained as combat units or used to farm; and water, which

can extinguish fires, grow rice, or purchase training for soldiers). But Del Castillo promises that *Battle Realms* will focus on battlefield action, with formations that actually make a difference, and a rock-paper-scissors balancing system that ensures each unit has definite strengths and weaknesses.

Battle Realms is ambitious, surely, but its advancements are long overdue, promising innovation that's marginally absent from recent C&C titles. With creative unit designs and a common-sense approach to realism, Ed Del Castillo's pet project looks to be in a commanding position next spring. — Eric Bratcher



■ Line of sight and elevation play a huge role in the game, and terrain will run the gamut from grasslands and mountains to swamps and forests. Note the disspating fog of war (right)



■ The Wolf Clan were originally shamanistic shale miners enslaved by the Lotus Clan. One of its more powerful units is called the Packmaster, for obvious reasons



HEADING FOR THE FUTURE

Liquid clearly envisions *Battle Realms* as a franchise. For example, a peasant may be abducted, only to reappear later as a deformed, praying mantis-type hero. He actually has become a member of the Mantis Clan, but they won't surface until *Battle Realms II*. In fact, the entire game is basically a setup for the sequel: the plot involves the discovery of a devastating cosmic imbalance between Yin and Yang, but you'll spend the entire game just identifying the problem. Its resolution will have to wait until game two.

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Each of your seven blades gives you unique advantages and disadvantages in combat. It's up to you to decide which one will work best against certain enemies.



麒麟



■ PLAYSTATION 2

7 BLADES

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami ■ Release Date: Winter 2000/2001 ■ Origin: Japan

Space ninja invade Japan's islands – is a Japanese film director involved in this game? You bet

Not all of the enemies you fight will be human — and expect quite a few to be outright bizarre.



While the ninja, swordfighting, and feudal Japanese scenery of 7 Blades may seem almost commonplace in today's gaming world, this game is definitely not what we've come to expect from a 3D action adventure. With great graphics, adrenaline-packed battles between over 20 characters, and a wildly twisting storyline involving, of all things, some strange sci-fi elements (it's based on the Japanese movie *Legend of Zippang*), this is anything but your traditional action game.

Producer Shinsuke Mukai describes 7 Blades as "very similar to *Tomb Raider* and *Tenchu*," and the similarities are easy to spot: you control characters from a third-person perspective and navigate through huge 3D levels fighting off enemies. What's very different about

7 Blades is the sheer amount of opposition you'll face. According to Mukai, a melee can now include as many as 20 enemies on screen at once, which makes

Up to 20 enemies can be on screen at once, creating some intense melee battles



the fracas a bit less stealthy and a whole lot more frantic. "It's mostly an action game," confides Muikai. "But there'll be puzzles to solve and passages where you must hide [Ienchiu-style] to progress."

Despite the intense action basis of the game, much care has also gone into creating good characters and a deep story. To pull this off, a major part of the design has been put into the hands of Kaizo Hayashi, the director of *Legend of Zippang*. Hayashi has played a pivotal role in creating the cinematic feel of the game and has worked closely with the team to modify the plot of the film into something that works for the game.

According to Hayashi, the story begins in 1640s Japan on the peaceful island of Dejima. Evil ninja raiders have struck the island and left the people there with no recourse except for the player to save them. At this point you can choose who you would like to play as — Gokurakumaru (the male hero) or Yuri (the female). This isn't just a cosmetic choice; it'll affect the entire feel of the game. "The man uses mostly swords — seven of them — and the woman uses mostly guns and other firepower weapons," explains Hayashi. "Depending on who you select, the story will be very different, but the [plots] will cross at points." Players will make their way out of rural Japan to decidedly more sci-fi and evil settings, until eventually they challenge

■ While the game will have huge levels to explore and puzzles to solve, a good chunk of the gameplay will be fast action



■ This monstrous blade may be slow, but you can bet it does a lot of damage when it hits

the enemy on their own turf — a shuriken-shaped starship. Really.

Due to their different weapon types, both playable characters will also offer significantly different gameplay experiences. Gokurakumaru, with his seven blades (which must be found over

the course of the game), engages in melee with his foes, while Yuri can't take the punishment up close, and instead kills enemies from further away. A *Zelda*-like lock-on keeps things fairly manageable when the horde comes at you, and, as Yuri, you can even lock onto enemies behind you and take them out while you run away. Each character can switch between the weapons they find at will, and, of course, different weapons perform better against different enemies so it'll be up to the player to manage what to use at given times.

Swordfighting, shooting, and a plot — this game has it all. While the action may be a bit more beat-'em-up-oriented than players are used to, the puzzles and engaging storylines should keep gamers playing until the end. — Blake Fischer

FROM FILM TO GAMES

Kaizo Hayashi may not be a common name in the American movie industry, but in his native Japan he's been a prolific director, producer, writer and actor. Since 1986 he has worked on at least eight films, including *The Most Terrible Time in My Life* and, of course, *Legend of Zippang* (which *7 Blades* is based on). When asked why he wanted to make a game instead of a movie, Hayashi replied simply: "Videogames have no limits, but Japanese movies have limits. With computer games, you can do anything."

Players will make their way out of rural Japan to decidedly more sci-fi and evil settings until eventually they challenge the enemy on their own turf — a shuriken-shaped starship. Really.



■ The lock-on function allows you to target an enemy — even as you run away



PC

ANARCHY ONLINE

■ Publisher: **Funcom** ■ Developer: **Funcom**
■ Release Date: **Q4 2000** ■ Origin: **Norway**

It's a brave new world for online RPGs

→ As the first science fiction entry into a soon-to-be-crowded online RPG market, *Anarchy Online* brings with it some new innovations, some new technology, and a *Blade Runner*-esque feel that is sure to appeal to the crowds of orc-killing savants eager to try something new.

Despite its rather chaotic-sounding name, *Anarchy Online* is actually quite a structured game. Players even have

control of the game's social structures at several different levels (including government) with certain player classes like the bureaucrat designed almost exclusively for political maneuvering.

"There's a lot more to the game than just the killing part," assures Designer Tommy Strand. To alleviate the "camping" issues associated with other MMORPGs, Funcom has set the game up so that quests — not just killing monsters — are

■ In *Anarchy Online* unique, customized quests are generated for each character



■ With a computer-aided sculptor from Funcom, players can design a truly unique character



the core of the game. At the heart of all this is an auto-content generation system that can whip up player quests on the fly specifically for those requesting them. "You can go out, get a quest, then go into a dungeon that is specifically designed for you" says Strand. So a fighter type character might have to go slay some mutants on the fringe, while a more passive character might just have to deliver an item across town. There is even an option for player-created quests, which should keep the world changing constantly.

All of this is wrapped into a pre-designed four-year story arc that will mark the beginning and end of *Anarchy Online*'s existence as a game. There is an overall plot with world-changing events that will be ongoing throughout this period and by the end, Strand says, "The game will be a lot different from when you first started."

— Blake Fischer

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

One of the neatest features in *Anarchy Online* is the public transport system that will help players traverse across the huge zones that make up the world. So, instead of a 40-minute run, you can now just jump in a subway and be whisked to your destination.

According to Designer Tommy Strand, cars would even have been possible, but who would want to roleplay in a world with traffic? The man's got a point.



■ All of the players in *AO* get their own personal apartments to live in



ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

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→ Alphas

■ Since this is the first surfing game on the market to use real 3D, it offers new perspectives like this in-the-tube cam.



■ PC, DREAMCAST, PLAYSTATION

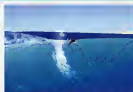
BILLABONG PRO SURFING

■ Publisher: Mattel Interactive ■ Developer: Krome Studios
■ Release Date: September ■ Origin: Australia

Surf the shark-free waters of your living room

DEAD MANS

Score: 6



■ Waves differ not only in size and speed, but also in which direction they break. While some will be easy rides, expect others to be merciless.



■ Tricks are judged both by their difficulty and by how much style is used to pull them off. A seasoned pro who perfectly executes a complex trick will earn more points than a rookie who barely survives the maneuver.



First it was snowboarding, then skateboarding, and now be wary — the surfing-game onslaught is about to begin. Leading the charge is Australia-based Krome Studios with its 3D rendition of the sport, *Billabong Pro Surfer*.

With surfing as with other boarding sports, control is the most essential piece of the design, and that's where the team at Krome obviously knows its stuff. Even in the early playable demo presented to *Next Generation*, it was a fairly intuitive process to get up and ride a wave, and we were riding like pros in almost no time. Of course, as the best games are easy to learn yet tough to master, *Billabong Pro Surfer* has loads of depth hidden just beneath the surface.

Using combinations of the three trick

buttons and the control pad, the challenge really comes when you attempt to pull off the loads of different tricks the game offers. You can take to the air and jump off the wave for backhand or forehand spins — grabbing the rail all the while — or you can sneak back into the



■ Each of the riders has a distinguishing signature move

COMBAT SURFING

Strangely enough, the best surfing game released thus far is actually one of the subgames in California Games for the Atari Lynx. Besides just great graphics and animation, the game also allowed up to four players to surf on the same wave, much like the rumble mode in *Billabong Pro Surfing*. Because of the Lynx's minor impact on the portable-gaming industry, nobody knows how close to gaming nirvana this mid-game came. Today, you can pick up a Lynx and *California Games* for under \$30 on the web. We recommend you check it out.



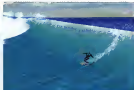
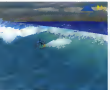
■ *Dead Man's* is a wave that amateur surfers should fear and respect. Still, if you've got the guts, this is where the real challenge lies.



tube, where the camera follows you inside for an intense view of the action.

Just mastering the tricks isn't enough because each wave will require a different set of skills. Each of the 10 waves in the game is a different ride, ranging from the easy breaks of Sandy Beach to the mammoth 10-foot faces of *Dead Man's*.

"One wave at the moment is almost impossible to ride because you'll get sucked right up the face," enthuses



Each of the waves in the game is a different ride, ranging from easy breaks to mammoth 10-foot faces

Krome CEO Robert Walsh. "Still, we're thinking of leaving it that way as the last wave since you can actually do it — it's just really challenging."

avid surfers may notice similarities between the waves in the game and real-life breaks, but they're not based on any specific real-world locations. Although the waves themselves might not be 100% authentic, the wave riders are. Players can choose from eight real-life pros (male and female), and each rider will be balanced to perform like their real-life counterpart in terms of speed and ability. Each pro will use the same boards as in real life, and will also have a defining signature move to help them stand out from the pack.

Anyone worried about the lack of vanity that might plague a surfing game certainly hasn't seen the modes featured in this title. The championship mode puts

you up against the AI (or up to seven other players taking turns) in a competition for the best score. There's also an arcade mode where you must dodge objects and earn points to reach the next level. But possibly the best way to play this game is in the rumble mode, where four players (two on PC and PS2 take on a wave at once and the last one standing is the victor. According to Walsh, this will be no-holds-barred competition — not only can you push people off their boards, but you can grab various power-ups, too.

While it's still months away from release, and while many things like the music and character models have yet to be finalized, *Billabong Pro Surfer* is already on its way to greatness. With plenty of time for tweaking before release, this could be the game that busts the surfing genre wide open. And trust us, there's more coming

— Blake Fischer



■ *Billabong's* eight true-to-life surfers will be tweaked to perform just like their real-world counterparts

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Microsoft

■ PC, PLAYSTATION 2

WORLD SPORTS CARS

■ Publisher: **Empire Interactive** ■ Developer: **West Racing**

■ Origin: **UK** ■ Release Date: **TBD (2001)**

Hit the track with the most realistic racing sim ever created

➔ If *World Sports Cars*'s co-designers (and twin brothers) Chris and Tony West had their way, racing games would be far more hardcore than today's norm. "It seems every racing game that comes out claims to have real physics," says Chris, "but as yet, only *Grand Prix Legends* has anything that could really be called real. We feel that the level of detail that *GPL* showed in its handling should be the norm as opposed to the exception in racing simulations."

Follow this train of thought and it's easy to see where the



■ In long races you'll have to pay careful attention to the wear and tear on your car and control systems as well as the car's steering.



■ Each vehicle's engine is realistically modeled with separate components. Fire it up your car, and the exhaust vibrates, the torque twists, etc.

"If you change something on the car, not only will you feel a change in the way it drives, but you will see the effect on the car"

— Chris West

drive for World Sports Cars has come from. Quite simply, the two brothers are creating the most realistic sports car racing sim imaginable. "All aspects of the car model are dealt with in a physically correct way," Chris excitedly proclaims. "If you change something on the car, not only will you feel a change in the way it drives, but you will see the effect on the car. So if you adjust the camber or

suspension link lengths you will see it change on screen."

As you'd expect, everything is fully adjustable. Spring rates, bumpstops, arm length and positioning, rollbar, damping, ride height and all other aspects of vehicle suspension can be tinkered with, and before you ask, the model also includes the implementation of

aerodynamic values to create downforce. Similarly, engine and transmission related features such as torque values and gear ratios are also modifiable.

"Everything has a proper value, everything has been modeled correctly," promises Chris. "The gearbox, the clutch — everything has a wear factor and can be damaged or broken, so if you're doing a very long race you have to keep an eye on that — that bit might fall and will then affect the pit stops later on."

Ah, the pits. A part of racing so often overlooked in games, but one that the West brothers are about to bring into the limelight with considerable force. "If you come into a pit stop it'll be up to you to pick up an air wrench and plug it in to get the car up on its jack, to take the wheels off to put a new wheel on," enthuses Tony. "And you'll be able to

THE PERFECT RACING GAME

While talking to Next Generation about the pit stops in WSC, Tony West brought up the Eysse classic *Pit Stop II* as inspiration. This got us to thinking — what old racing games could developers still learn from?



Outrun (Arcade): How to make kick-ass driving music. (Magical Sound Shower)

Daytona USA (Arcade): How to make a powerful ride feel oh, so good.



Enduro (Atari 2600): How to make a game last forever (*Gran Turismo 3 (PlayStation):* How to make a game seem to last forever by making it buggy and unbreakable) **Rally Speedway (64):** It's cool if, when you crash, you come running out of the car on fire and you have to roll to put it out



■ As the audio will match the visual quality, expect to hear everything from the electric starter motor routine to the intense track noise



■ The level of detail on the cars is mighty impressive — a closer look reveals that even the wheels are properly modeled. What you can't see here is that the intricate brake assembly is fully modeled as well



perform all manner of tasks (such as) changing fluid levels, refueling, changing the driver, replacing disc pads, tuning your engine, even down to a bucket and sponge that you can pick up and clean the windscreen with."

Naturally, however, there are gameplay implications. "It's going to be up to you to know what's wrong with your car; what needs fixing and what needs just checking and stuff," says Tony. "So it's kind of a game within a game and I think it'll be one of the strong features of the title. It's probably going to separate it from other racing games."

But there are many other features that distinguish WSC from the competition. The level of damage detail is just one, and WSC promises a system as comprehensive as the rest of the game. "All the cars are modeled inside and out," says Chris, "and are panel based, so if something on the real car opens or detaches then it does on our models." Players can also remove all the body panels and drive the car with no bodywork. "This allows for some nice damage effects," he continues, "as well as makes the cars feel more real, and not

simply like an indestructible box on wheels."

And while Empire is still not ready to announce any of the car or track licenses, the twins are already one step ahead of the game. "We have designed WSC to be the basis for a whole series of expansion and add-on packs," reveals Chris. "Obviously you'll get car packs and track packs, but these can be any cars from Formula One on down to go-karts, and the tracks could be anything from Le Mans to Daytona. We plan to do some of these ourselves and rely on the fans to provide the rest by releasing the format and editors on the Internet. The possibilities are enormous."

— Nigel Edge



■ Even tiny details inside the car are modeled

"We feel the level of detail that Grand Prix Legends showed in its handling should be the norm as opposed to the exception in racing simulations"

— Chris West



■ In the pit you can expect to take control of all your car's parameters

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→ Milestones

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games



■ While you can do fine for awhile with standing attacks, (right), a huge part of UFC is the ability to fight on the ground. A good takedown (top) can easily lead to a submission hold (above) and a tap out

■ DREAMCAST, PLAYSTATION

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP



→ Every UFC fan in the country is about to fall in love with Crave, who may just be publishing the most realistic fighting game ever this September. Initially previewed in our May 2000 issue, *Ultimate Fighting Championship* features 22 (initially) of the toughest, strongest, smartest fighters

ever to actually walk the Earth. Each gorgeously modeled fighter lists a huge number of moves, ranging from standard punches and kicks to complex grappling moves, counters, and reversals taken from any number of combat arts. UFC for DC is developed by Anchor, and Opus is handling the PSX version.



■ Like the original UFC matches, the game does not have any weight classes to separate the big guys from the really, really, big guys

→ Milestones

■ PC

POOL OF RADIANCE II: RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR



■ The game features a full day/night cycle, and players venturing out after dark will be more likely to encounter the restless undead

→ Matel brings the nostalgia into play with this sequel toSSI's original gold box classic. Featuring 3D graphics and pre-rendered backgrounds, new AD&D third edition rules, and a huge adventure to play through (characters go from first to sixteenth level in the course of the game) expect an impressive entry into the world of fantasy RPG's should you hit the Pool later this year



■ Developer Stormfront has chosen to eschew motion capture in favor of creating all the animations by hand, so every creature and character (undead, rogue, barbarian) will move as it should



■ DREAMCAST, NINTENDO 64

RUSH 2049



■ Each track features a wide network of shortcuts, running on, below, and even above the surface

→ The San Francisco of the future just keeps looking better and better in this September release developed by Atari and published by Midway. While we've raved about the perfect port of the arcade version before (NG 05/00), the newest standout feature is a beautifully balanced battle mode that plays better than most dedicated car combat titles. Online details are still uncertain, but Atari is hoping to implement a feature whereby players will be able to download "ghost" races to their VMU.



■ Leave it to the Rush 2049 development team to create a fantastic battle mode as an afterthought. Every car combat title should have a driving engine this solid

■ DREAMCAST, ARCADE

WWF ROYAL RUMBLE



■ The models are a little chunky, but they get can get nine of them onscreen at one time — four players simultaneously plus five computer controlled punching bags.

➔ Dreamcast developer Yuke's is teaming with Sega's arcade division for this title, which will appear both in arcades and on the DC in late August. While the version we played suffered from some oddy choppy animations, it has to be said that the mayhem that comes from nine wrestlers (from a stable of 20) duking it out onscreen simultaneously is really kind of cool. WWF fans can thank THQ for this one.



■ There's a definite arcade feel to the action. Some of the foreign objects that enter the ring are a bit excessive, and matches always begin in the ring and end up in the back room.

■ PLAYSTATION

007 RACING



■ The player will gain access to many of Bond's famous cars, from the Aston Martin to the BMW, all armed bumper to bumper with the latest weaponry from Q's workshop.



■ In addition to more typical guards, players will face off against classic Bond henchmen like Oddjob and jaws.

➔ While the title may suggest big heads and goofy powerups, this Eutechnyx-developed game is actually more of a serious, mission based, driving shooter grounded in the James Bond universe. Emulating the action in a good Bond movie, the player must race around the countryside, simultaneously battling enemy guards, helicopters, tanks, and other vehicles with a wide assortment of Bond-style weapons. EA expects the game to hit stores sometime this fall.

■ PLAYSTATION 2

DESTRUCTION DERBY: RAW



■ One of the more noticeable adjustments is the greater precision of the damage model, which now tracks seven different impact zones.



■ The cars seem to gain bigger air this time around, and bonus points are awarded for executing "combo" moves that knock another car into a spin.

➔ One of the PlayStation's first racing franchises continues to improve in this, its third iteration. Due in September from publisher Midway, this latest sequel features 25 tracks, six battle arenas, 17 cars (plus 7 bonus vehicles), a whole new scoring system, and cash management elements. Pygnosis has also refined the collision system, and added additional play modes such as Skyscraper and Assault.

■ PLAYSTATION 1

VALKYRIE PROFILE



■ While loosely turn-based, battles are fast paced, and draw heavily from Capcom-style fighters. Combo attacks between various party members are particularly effective.



■ In addition to jumping and swordfighting, Valkyrie shoots crystals that freeze enemies in place, or that can be used as steps to scale a wall.

➔ Developed by tri-Ace (who also developed the Star Ocean series), this title offers up a strangely satisfying blend of fast-paced RPG battles with old school, platform-style exploration. Based loosely upon Norse mythology, the game puts the player in the role of Valkyrie, a warrior-goddess in charge of recruiting newly-deceased souls to fight for the gods in a pending apocalyptic war. Erik is bringing the title to the states this September.

H A L F



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Sega Dreamcast

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Four years from now, will we be talking about how Xbox came out of nowhere to throw Sony from its throne? Or will Bill's baby be another failed American console such as 3DO, Jaguar, and Nuon? (Oh wait — Nuon hasn't failed yet.) Next Generation goes behind the scenes at Microsoft for an exclusive look at...

The Making of Xbox

From early concept to major competitor — **the complete story**



X men — powerful mutants or masterminds behind the next great console? Probably a bit of both.

- From left to right
- Ed Fries — first party
 - Kevin Bachus — third party
 - Seamus Blackley — the instigator
 - J. Allard — the pitchman

Photography by Bruce Carroll

➔ It is February 14 (Valentine's Day) in the year 2000. The last console war is history — the "stereo company" the clear victor with a worldwide installed base of 70 million. The

console giants are busy preparing for the next war. Sega is working on growing Dreamcast through online promotions and great games. Nintendo is hinting at Dolphin and how it will return them to the top, all the while insisting the N64 isn't dead yet. Sony is less than three weeks away from unleashing the PS2 on Japan, where it will surely break all kinds of sales records on its way to world domination — again.

But on the evening of February 14, in a remote location deep inside Microsoft's HQ, Bill Gates has

■ Meet the X men. These aren't North American marketing suits paraphrasing information provided by their Japanese superiors — these are the guys who are actually making the Xbox, and hoping to make history. This is the first time that Next Gen (or any magazine, for that matter) has had the opportunity to sit down and discuss an upcoming platform with the people who are actually doing all the work. The combination of backgrounds, expertise, and talent is astounding, but what really holds this crew together is that they're all gamers at heart who just want to make a platform for some killer games. Of course, it helps that they work for one of the largest corporations in the world.



just given the final approval on Xbox. Should it even matter? Microsoft's just some software behemoth trying to get into the console business, and they'll surely fall flat on their multi-billionaire faces.

Does the company have a chance breaking into the console market at the very time when the Department of Justice is breaking them in two? Next Gen visited Microsoft, talked to the

Xbox creators, and uncovered their plans to monopolize... uh, dominate the console market.

In the beginning...

"It came to me on a plane, of all places," recalls Seamus Blackley, one of the proud fathers of the Xbox and the initiator of the long (and they're hoping fruitful) launch process. "I was looking at PC hardware coming out at the end of

the year and I started thinking, 'Good lord, we could make just one monstrous son-of-a-bitch game console with one of these things.'"

And so it started. Around January '99, Blackley brought the idea to Kevin Bachus, who immediately saw its potential. "We [realized we] could produce something just like a console, but with all the advantages of the PC," describes Bachus.

Soon Bachus and Blackley

had pretty much given up their day jobs to focus entirely on Xbox. They went to publishers, developers, hardware makers, and consumers to find out what people really wanted. Once they had enough feedback, they pitched the idea to Ed Fries, head of Microsoft Games, to see what he thought. And much like an adventuring party in an RPG, another warrior was added to their quest. The

final key addition to the core team came in the form of J. Allard, the man who brought Internet Explorer to the world (and Microsoft to trial), and who at the time was off racing bikes and being all "extreme." They tried to convince him that this "Xbox thing was going to be huge," to paraphrase one of J's pre-Explorer quotes regarding the Internet. But it took a bad racing fall and a broken



Profile

Name:

Seamus Blackley
(aka Dr. FeelGood)

Position:

Director, Xbox Advanced
Technology Team

What exactly do you do:

Buy Xbox developers drinks

Background:

Tried to pick up girls by playing
jeopardy; tried to pick up
girls by being a physicist; tried
to pick up girls by making
games; trying to pick up girls
by working on Xbox

Career high point:

Beating J. at Robinson

Most embarrassing

moment:

My mother seeing the *Wall
Street Journal* article on my
"eleventh" technique at GDC

Lesson learned:

Media blackout for Mom
and Dad

Catchphrase:

"A team that doesn't have fun
can't make a fun product"

If you weren't a high-profile
figure in the games industry,
you'd likely be:

Living in the gutter, trying to
pick up girls

ankle before I finally
jumped (er, hobbled) on
board.

Every three months the
group would convene with
Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer,
and each time the project
could have been canceled
— but it never was.

Allard describes the
process like this: "We all
went into our own areas.
Seamus worked with
developers, Kevin worked
with publishers, Ed started
growing a portfolio, and I
started working out the OS.
Then we got together and
beat the shit out of each
other."

According to Fries:
"Much of the process was
deciding what the Xbox was
not going to be. Vested
parts of the company
wanted other things, but we
had to go through focusing
the project. It's not about
PC game-compatibility, web

TV, or productivity." And
each time the group de-
cided to further focus the
Xbox on gaming, they faced
another corporate battle.

Most of the radical ideas
about reinventing the
console business went by
the wayside, but the one
thing that had to be
changed with the console
model was the
development process. As
Blackley explains: "Why
throw out everything you
know each time a new
system comes out? From a
development cost point of
view and a quality point of
view, it just doesn't make
any sense."

For the first time ever, a
piece of hardware was
being created from scratch
by guys who have spent
their lives developing
software.

"We have an
opportunity," says Fries.
"Once you decide to do

something like this without
the history (of a Sony or
Nintendo), you can take a
fresh look at it. We have an
opportunity to fix a lot of
what's wrong."

Microsoft's solution? To
unite the console business
model and design with the
development methodologies
of the PC world — making
little fixes to each along the
way. The original plan was to
launch the Xbox in fall 2000
to go head-to-head with
PlayStation 2, but Bill Gates

wasn't impressed.

According to Allard: "Bill
said: 'Not good enough. If
you have some sort of
benchmark, you may win,
but you wouldn't notice the
difference. You have to be
able to see the difference.'"
So the team went back and
upped the Xbox's specs
and processor speed for a
2001 launch date.

Eventually it all came
down to the fateful
February 14 meeting,
dubbed the Valentine's Day

Massacre. This was it: the
final yes or no. It would be
the hardest meeting yet. The
plan had been narrowed
and the group decided what
the Xbox wouldn't be. Now
they were tallying away some
of the things that the
executives thought would
be in the machine. All
previous meetings
determined whether Project
Xbox would keep going or
be killed. "This one," says
Fries, "was get killed or put
Bill on stage."

Profile

Name:
J. Allard
(aka Minister of Soul)

Position:
General Manager,
Platform and Third Party

What exactly do you do:
Make game developers heroes

Background:
First games company at 14, skateboarded in Boston for four years (college); started internet work at Microsoft (1991-DOJ deposition); returned to gaming roots as part of Team Xbox (1999)

Career high point:
Trip Hawkins telling me in '86 that I was so wrong to believe that 3D games would be big some day

Most embarrassing moment:
Having Seamus beat me at Robotron

Lesson learned:
The only legitimate use of a CPU is for games

Catchphrase:
"Go big or go home"
(also: "Don't flip")

If you weren't a high-profile figure in the games industry, you'd likely be:
Professional skateboarder, rave DJ, paparazzi, Krispy Kreme franchise owner, Airwalk shoe designer or F1 driver

"This wasn't what Microsoft originally wanted, but it is the right machine. Approve it or don't. We aren't changing it"

J. Allard, Microsoft General Manager

Allard sums up the challenge facing the group: "We were selling a new product concept and a new playbook. A totally new business model. We're going to have inventory. No PC-compatibility. No start button. There is a phase where you expand all of the possibilities, and then start narrowing it down to make it work. Now we had to explain this."

When Bill first heard

that the Xbox wasn't going to be PC-compatible, he supposedly (as the team implies) started leaning over the table at J, and saying something to the effect of, "[Bleep!] let me get this straight [bleep] it isn't going to be PC-compatible?" Still, Allard and the crew wouldn't budge.

"This wasn't what Microsoft originally wanted," Allard explains, "but it is the right machine. Approve it or don't. We aren't changing

it." About 9pm on Valentine's Day (after several desperate phone calls to very perturbed significant others), Bill and Steve gave it the final okay. No more explaining or proving — it suddenly became time to make it happen.

Building The Box

After the final okay from Microsoft Employee #1, the group had to start turning ideas into realities.

According to Bachus, "We pretty much talked to every possible supplier of chips until the final decisions were made." Oddly enough, the one thing that really made the box come together at the right price was the extreme competition between hardware vendors. The competition (something the DOJ says Microsoft is stifling) drove prices down so that the Xbox was able to get the best components and hit a mass-market price point (\$200 to \$300).

But the driving force behind every decision on the hardware for the Xbox was what kind of effect it would have on the software. Blackley goes as far as to say: "We are building hardware out of

necessity. What does the consumer want most? Good games. How do we get that? By giving the developers all the tools and hardware they need to do this."

"Developers and publishers told us what they wanted," Blackley says of the initial process. "Being software developers and publishers [ourselves], we are in a unique position to provide support and insight. Essentially the Xbox is a big software business, with this unfortunate hardware aspect we had to learn how to deal with. We are making a console for software. We are a software company. We listened to game makers and they helped evolve the plan."

When the group began expanding, they realized that everything they needed was

Profile

Name:
Kevin Bachus

Position:
Director of Third Party

What exactly do you do:
Hack the resources of a \$365 billion company in the service of game publishers everywhere

Background:
Worked in the games industry for 15 years, with detours into the film industry and computer journalism five years developing games on my own, three years at 280-Dave, three years at Mindscape, three years at Microsoft, 15 years at Xbox, Inc.

Career high point:
Xbox, baby!

Most embarrassing moment:

Trying to talk my way through Japanese customs with five hand-built Xbox prototypes

Lesson learned:
Never forget the all-important paperwork sitting on your desk 3500 miles away

Catch phrase:
No surprises, no shortcuts, no problem!

If you weren't a high-profile figure in the games industry, you'd likely be:
Editor of Next Gen. When, lucky for me...

right at the Redmond campus. "Is there another company in the world that could do this? I don't think so, because it takes a bunch of different pieces, especially the software. The marketing, Developer support, Worldwide sales and distribution," describes an amazed Fries.

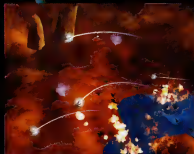
As we toured the facilities, it became quite apparent that Microsoft does have plenty of unfair advantages. The combination of talented, experienced people, incredible resources and a hands-off approach by management enabled the Xbox team to build their

dream machine — right there, right now. Got an idea for a new controller? Just give Creative Director Horace Luke (a one-man design monopoly if ever one existed — break him up before it's too late!) a call, and he'll sketch it out, render it in 3D, carve it up, and have a finished plastic piece in your hands by the end of the day. For most other companies, that whole process could take anywhere from two weeks to a month. Here, not a single day.

The one world-changing element on the Xbox is the 8GB hard drive. "On the PS2, you can do a totally

photorealistic room," says Fries, "but once you go through the door, the memory is gone. Then you have to go to a DVD drive with 500 milliseconds of access time. [The PS2's] made for movies and music, not data retrieval. On the Xbox, you can load data on the intermediate cache (the hard drive) and get a much more acceptable 10-millisecond access time."

Combine the extra memory with the 733 processor, 64MB of unified RAM, the reportedly amazing nVidia graphics card, and the 256-voice sound card, and it's easy to see why developers,



■ This interactive tech demo, dubbed *Tau*, has been produced by the UK's Kiju Entertainment. In it, players can take control of a gun turret and blast invading space ships. These screenshots show off more of Xbox's realtime rendering capabilities, as well as the system's ability to process a downright invading hundreds of ships. Microsoft stresses that *Tau* is only a tech demo — not a game in production.

Profile

Name:
Horace Luke
(Hey, Design Guy!)

Position:
Creative Director

What exactly do you do?
Design-o-rama. I design almost anything and everything that has to do with Xbox. Basically, I have the dream job of every 15-year-old kid.

Background:
A bit of this, a bit of that. I came from a background of image and brand design for a number of large projects and companies around the world. You can say I tried the buffet of careers!

Career high point:
I don't think anything will beat our launch next year. The question will be, "How will I be able to top Xbox launch?"

Most embarrassing moment:
Interviewed for a job in front of a group at Microsoft in 1996 with my fly open. Needless to say, I didn't get the job then!

Lesson learned:
Happiness is what life is all about.

Catch-phrase:
"What's Xbox's secret sauce?" "No!"

If you weren't a high-profile figure in the games industry, you'd likely be:
Some dot-com guy or a venture capitalist's think-tank guy.

Industry experts and gamers are getting legitimately excited about the prospects of the Xbox.

The Look

As creative director for Xbox, Horace Luke is responsible for the look and feel of everything that has to do with the console. He and his team of seven designers/sculptors/3D modelers gamers design the controller, the box, the letterhead, the logo, and even the little tchotchkes they pass out to ungrateful journalists like us. The biggest task was coming up with the system and the controller. Basically, the

Xbox team got together and let their minds wander, figuring no idea is a bad idea. The weird, the sublime, and the just plain ugly are produced in a fit of total creativity. Then they have to pull back and turn the machine and controller into something realistic, cost-effective, and just damn cool.

"The gamepad is the face of your console," says Blackley. "It defines your interaction with the console. You have to look at what you need in the game and what consumers are looking for. It's critical to get that right."

While many people

assume that the look of the Xbox won't be finished until much closer to launch, they are completely wrong: The Xbox and its controller are already near completion. (We know because we were allowed to hold several mock-ups.)

First Party

As head of the Microsoft Games group, Fries started four years ago with 100 people; since then, the division has grown to a little over 500 people. The plan is to add another 200 internal people to the group in the coming year. According to Fries, "I'm shooting for 20 to 30 titles from first party

in the first year, three to four times that from third parties, and 100 or so titles throughout the first year."

The key job for Fries is creating a dynamic portfolio of games that will cover all the important categories and give gamers something to really lust after. "What matters is quality," he believes. "Quantity only matters to have a good variety. The key is to have at least one great game in every important genre."

Fries was less than impressed with Sony's E3 showing. "It's like the Saturn in a lot of ways: really hard to get to the main

processor," he says of PS2. "Sony has great developers, and there'll be some good titles. However, if we make developing easy, then they (developers) can spend their time making better games, not fighting with odd technology."

The two biggest concerns about Microsoft first-party software are the fact that they've never done a console game and that they don't have any first-party Japanese developers. The first concern shouldn't really be one because Fries and his team completely understand the difference between console and PC

Profile

Name:

Ed Fries

Position:

Vf, Games Publishing

What exactly do you do:
I run Microsoft's first-party games business for PC and Xbox (yeah, I play games for a living)

Background:

Spent 10 years working on Excel and Word to make the world more productive. Realized the error of my ways and am now desperately attempting to undo the damage by making everyone seriously unproductive.

Career high point:

Creating the "Fish" screen saver for Berkeley Systems' *Xbox Dore*.

Most embarrassing moment:

Admitted creating the "Fish" screen saver in a major games magazine.

Lesson learned:

Loose lips sink ships

Catch-phrase:

"If your job isn't fun, you're not doing it right"

If you weren't a high-profile figure in the games industry, you'd likely be:

A starving poet. The problem is, I can only write linericks. We call that the Serey Playlist, and the Dreamcast caused quite the sensation, but when it comes to great games, forget those other names, Xbox is the next generation.



Xbox gets Halo

Of all the rumors surrounding Microsoft's acquisitions for the Xbox the only one to come true at press time is the purchase of Bungie. Currently Bungie has two offices, one in Chicago, IL and one in San Mateo, CA and are split into three main teams (*Halo*, *Oni*, and *Fantasy Siege*).

For two years running Bungie has wowed the crowds at E3 with the astonishing *Halo*, and according to Fries, "What is even more impressive is *Fantasy Siege* — a totally different type of game running on the same engine. The engine is a very important thing to us and is a huge part of the deal." It was too early to talk about a lot of specifics, but all of the Bungie team will be moving to Redmond and they will all be assimilated. Oni will still be put out on the PC (and Published by Take Two — not Microsoft) and we'd guess that *Halo* and *Fantasy Siege* could be exclusive Xbox launch titles. Fries refused to comment either way, but did say, "Obviously the time frame for *Halo* lines up well with the Xbox launch."

games, and their experience developing for the PC will be a huge advantage in getting the most out of the Xbox. The second concern has been addressed with the opening of a Japanese first-party development arm in Japan. Fries intimated that Microsoft had hired "a very high-up guy in the development community of a major Japanese console publisher. With some great design credits to his name."

Because the system is still well over a year away from launch, Microsoft didn't share many specific titles, but we know that the Microsoft sports lineup (NFL Fever, NBA Inside Drive, Microsoft Baseball) have all been in Xbox development for some time. Microsoft realizes that every single winner in the console market has had the best sports games — this isn't a coincidence. Other Microsoft PC games will come over to the Xbox, but only the appropriate titles,

"I'm shooting for 20 to 30 titles from first party in the first year, three to four times that from third parties"

— Ed Fries, Head of Microsoft games group

"We don't want PC games on the Xbox," says Fries. "If we bring over *Motocross Madness 2*, we'll spend a year on the game making sure it takes full advantage of the Xbox. Certain PC games just won't translate to the console, like flight simulators and real-time strategies, and we won't try to make them work."

Third Party

Crucial to the success of Xbox is a strong third-party lineup. Since Xbox is a U.S.-designed game system from an American company, will Japan's development community support it? "Conversations with Japanese companies don't go like that," notes Bachus. "They are interested in

making money. They want to know our distribution model in Japan. But no one has said, 'You're not Japanese and we can't work with you.'" Without naming names, Bachus confidently asserts that "The Xbox will have plenty of support from big-name Japanese publishers."

One of the biggest fears surrounding Xbox is that PC companies will simply port over their titles, but Bachus isn't worried. "There is concern about direct ports, but when you talk to a publisher, they say that that's death for a franchise. If a company is going to produce their racing game for PC and Xbox and make them identical, but their competitors target the

Xbox, then the competition will look better, play better, and damage their franchise — giving their competitors an advantage. A good franchise requires focus for every platform it's released on."

What kind of games will be on the Xbox? Microsoft is very adamant that this is not a PC Jr. Initially, a very focused, limited amount of titles will be aimed squarely at the target customer for the Xbox: 18-year-old console gamers. There will be some risks, and unusual things that will push the envelope creatively, but the core games will be very much what you would expect from a console launch (Fighting, RPG, Racing, Sports, etc.).

But is Microsoft too focused on being another console maker? Are they afraid to redefine what a console game can be?

"We're trying to let you know that we get it," refutes Blackley. "A big rule in talking to developers is no surprises. We want to tell them everything and we want to learn what they want to do so we can help them. We haven't set any steadfast rules on what can or can't make it to the Xbox. We'll decide on a case-by-case basis. We absolutely want to have innovative games."

The Plan for Online

Everyone knows online gaming is the future, but when is it really gonna happen? Microsoft is

PLAYSTATION 2 VS. XBOX

As the PlayStation 2 is the most advanced game console currently available, we've done a side-by-side comparison of the specs, features, and differences in the two systems.

PlayStation 2	CPU	Xbox
300MHz MIPS	733 MHz Intel	

The Xbox has a faster processor. Also, by using PC architecture and tools, developers don't have to return programming to work with the machine.

GRAPHICS PROCESSOR	
100MHz Sony GS	300 MHz custom-designed GPU developed by Microsoft and nVidia

In theory the nVidia chip will be the single most advanced graphics processor in the world, enabling amazing worlds to be created. However, the chip isn't done yet, and at this point it must still be considered vaporous.

MEMORY	
32MB (total)	64MB Unified

Sure, more RAM is better, but what's really exciting is Xbox's unified memory, which enables developers to put memory where it's needed, when it's needed.

MEMORY BANDWIDTH	
3.3 GB/sec	6.4 GB/sec

Fretty dippy, really fretty bandwidth means faster action and smoother games.

CLAIMED FULL-FEATURE POLYGON PERFORMANCE	
20 million a second	50 million a second

More polygons equals smoother characters and more detailed environments.

PARTICLE PERFORMANCE	
150 million a second	50 million a second

No advantage here, but the Xbox manages to at least match the PS2.

SIMULTANEOUS TEXTURES	
1	4

Pushing polygons has always been the processor measuring stick, but textures are what make games come to life. More simultaneous textures means more detailed-looking images onscreen at the same time. This is good.

COMPRESSED TEXTURES	
No	Yes (4 to 1)

The biggest hint on the PS2 hardware is pushing textures through the VMAT. The Xbox has a huge texture advantage, since developers can essentially store four times the amount of textures with very little loss in quality.

FULL-SCENE ANTI-ALIAS	
No	Yes

PS2 lets you do anti-alias specific polygons, a show for most developers. Xbox lets you flip a switch and smooth the entire screen. (See X-File, page 10)

STORAGE RESOL	
4x DVD, 8MB memory card	4x DVD, 1GB hard drive, 8MB memory card

This is where the Xbox really surpasses the PS2. The 6GB hard drive gives developers an intermediate scratch disk to load audio, textures, and anything else they want. The access speed of a hard drive is five times faster than a DVD and allows the developers a quick backup to the RAM. Sony is offering a hard drive as an add-on, but because every unit won't have a hard drive, developers may not support it fully, resulting in less expansive experiences.

IO	
Game Controller x3, USB, Game controller x4, USB, BNA, PCMCIA	

This is where you see the difference in the ideology behind the machines. The PS2 is set up to be an entertainment machine while the Xbox is set up to be a gaming console. The additional lookups are handy for the entertainment center, but Microsoft chose four controller ports because it's better for games.

AUDIO CHANNELS	
48	124

More channels mean a richer sound, and richer sound means aural pleasure.

POSITIONAL 3D AUDIO SUPPORT IN HARDWARE	
No	Yes

If you've never heard a game in 3D with all of the effects on, you need to.

BROADBAND	
Future upgrade	Yes

Expensive peripherals are a tricky proposition: they shrink the potential user base and developers frequently don't want to pay the higher fees. This could split the market some, but our guess is that not many people will go in for the modem.

MODERN ENABLED	
Not planned	Optional

A USB modem will be sold separately at launch for Xbox owners who don't have access to a broadband line or don't want to pay the higher fees. This could split the market some, but our guess is that not many people will go in for the modem.

MAXIMUM RESOLUTION	
640 x 480 (60 Hz)	640 x 480 (60 Hz)

Both have more than enough resolution capabilities for today's TVs, but the advancing technology of TV (DVI, etc.) means that support could come in handy.

HDTV SUPPORT	
Limited	Yes

If you own an HDTV or plan to, Xbox games will look much better on it.

U.S. LAUNCH DATE	
October 26, 2000	Feb 2001

To be a year later than PS2 means that the Xbox must be a superior machine and the difference must be noticeable at a glance.

FINAL WORD: Usually preliminary spec sheets are just that, preliminary. That Xbox is being built on mostly existing hardware (the graphics and sound) and are still not final to the company's claims are not only possible, but factual as well. How much difference will this all make at launch? With the dev team already in place, and developers already up to speed on the technology, expect Xbox to hit the ground running.



Profile

Name:
Chanel Summers

Position:
Audio Manager, Advanced Technology Team

What exactly do you do:
Help create audio that's so mind-blowing, Xbox gamers forget all about the graphics!

Background:
Joined the game industry in 1992. Worked as a producer and game designer. Switched to audio. Never looked back.

Career high point:
Launching DirectMusic, ushering in the era of interactive music!

Most embarrassing moment:
Getting caught with my pants down in Next Gen.

Lessons learned:
Never tell a journalist about your new tattoo.

Catch phrase:
"Audio is more than just wallpaper in a game"

If you weren't a high-profile figure in the games industry, you'd likely be:
The new guitarist for Veruca Salt.

including a broadband connection and a hard drive with the Xbox, but even they believe that the Internet revolution in console gaming isn't yet upon us.

So what kind of multiplayer should we expect from Xbox? "Depends on the game," Bachus suggests. "Ideally, we'd like both split-screen and online, but it's very difficult. Some games lend themselves to online play while others are better for four guys on a couch and one TV."

Initially the Xbox will see more split-screen games, with online additions. Over time there will be more hybrids, and eventually there will be games that are designed for online play. "We are working with a few

companies to figure out how to do online right, and find a killer app," Bachus declares. "Anyone who says that they understand how console games are going to work online at this point is a fool."

Just because Microsoft understands the situation doesn't mean there aren't big plans to incorporate online games.

"From a gaming perspective," says Allard, "we're coming upon a big change. Network gaming will redefine the medium. Five years from now a solitary game just won't be interesting. The gaming industry is going very mainstream and Microsoft needs a wake-up. We redefined the way people did work; now we want to change the way people play."

Will Xbox make it?

Promising outlooks to say the least, but plans generally don't look flawed until after the fact. As Bachus acknowledges: "If I knew we were forgetting something, then we wouldn't forget it. I'm sure there will be some small thing we wish we'd have done differently the day the system launches, but we're extremely confident that we've made the right choices and provided developers and gamers with an amazing new gaming console." The only thing we don't know about the Xbox is what the games will be, and in the end that's the only thing that really matters. What's reassuring is that the makers of the Xbox were the ones to point this out.

— Mike Solomon

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THE DEMON



THE BEASTKING



"A wildly original game world, and some of the most frenetic action seen to date."

—NextGen Magazine, February 2000

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In an era of unparalleled console power, developers the world over are either cutting back or dropping PC development altogether. Epic Megagames, the creator of *Unreal Tournament*, has claimed that its next title will be designed for the console, and even design legend Peter Molyneux, creator of the forthcoming *Black and White*, has said that his next title will not lead on PC. More and more publishers are looking at console options, and looking less and less at the PC.

But is PC gaming really dying? If you mean by "dying" there are no more great games coming — absolutely not. There are those who still see the PC as a viable platform, and not everyone has deserted the ship. So, without further ado...

20 Games that will save the PC

You've come to expect innovative, original and groundbreaking games for your PC — and we've found them. **Next Generation** has tracked down 20 of the hottest forthcoming PC games, complete with exclusive new screenshots. Some you've heard about before, some are being looked at here for the first time, but every single one makes the perfect excuse to get that upgrade you've been thinking about.



■ *Battle Realms* features a richly detailed and highly interactive gameworld that sets it apart from other RTS games.

Battle Realms

Publisher: **Crave**
Developer: **Liquid Entertainment**
Release Date: **Q2 2001**

WHAT'S THE GAME?

A 3D RTS set in a feudal Japan where four groups, the Dragon, Wolf, Lotus, and Serpent Clans, make war against one another in an effort to discover the source of an imbalance between Yin and Yang. The brainchild of Ed Del Castillo (who produced the original *Command & Conquer* and *C&C: Red Alert*), this game offers the most realistic take yet on battlefield interactions.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Battle Realms takes RTS games to the next level. Forests aren't impassable, they're navigable and destructible. Individual units analyze their enemies' weaknesses, jockey for position, and power up for special moves. Resource management is completely natural (i.e., water is needed to douse fire or grow crops) but de-emphasized, in favor of focusing the player's attention on battlefield tactics. (See Alpha, page 45).

Black and White

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Lionhead Studios
Release Date: Q3 2000

WHAT'S THE GAME?

Populous meets Pokémon in this world-building God game, in which players control the fate of a tribe, raise a giant magical creature, and battle other gods with their own tribes and magical creatures.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

It is this kind of original game design that continues to keep PC design ahead of most console titles. Despite the numerous things the game world enables, gameplay is easy and straightforward. Designer Peter Molyneux has built a nicely organic environment with a surprising natural undercurrent, and players will actually sense the repercussions of their actions, which dynamically alter the world they play in.

■ Your pet directly reflects what you've taught it, so if you teach it to be good it will look friendly, but if you teach it with evil it will grow claws and fangs.



■ Dungeon Siege's 80-hour adventure takes place in a wide range of varied locales ranging from deserts to frozen mountain peaks.

Dungeon Siege

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Gas Powered Games
Release Date: Q2 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

This isometric action RPG with a 70-80 hour adventure (either single player or with friends) includes an editor that should provide wannabe RPG creators with near infinite expandability. The game features a huge overworld map and plenty of dungeons to explore, and in a first for the genre — absolutely no load times.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

This will be the title that finally beats Diablo at its own game. Not by trying to out-Diablo it, but by rethinking the action-RPG in the first place, and designing some kick-ass technology to make the necessary enhancements. Beautiful graphics, huge monsters, no load times, and a unique character creation system all combine to make this a next generation, immersive dungeon-crawler that's easy to play. We expect thousands of players to rush online when this one ships, followed shortly with plenty of user generated content. Trust us — this one's a monster.

■ Don't expect even odds when the forces of evil are involved. Balance things out with a well-rounded party of players online, and even hire some NPCs.



20 GAMES that will save the PC



■ A big part of the game is its focus on protecting real-world locations — or not

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2

Publisher: Westwood Studios
Developer: Westwood Studios
Release Date: October 2000

WHAT'S THE GAME?

This 2D, isometric RTS, sequel to *Red Alert*, is set on an alternate Earth shortly after WWII, where Russia has rebuilt itself into a military powerhouse capable of lodging its boot heel on the world's throat. An exotic assortment of land, sea, and air units run the gamut from traditional foot soldiers to lightning-generating tanks and mind-controlled giant squid (!).

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

This sequel continues to refine the frenetic, intense RTS action that consoles have yet to learn to emulate. Besides adding new units, it also moves the action into real-world urban areas, requiring players to defend such cherished national treasures as the White House, the Statue of Liberty, and ... Ohio.

Escape from Monkey Island

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: LucasArts
Release Date: Q2 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

The latest in a much beloved series of hilarious, exceptionally well-produced adventure games. Follow the adventures of Guybrush Threepwood as he sails the seven seas along with his beloved bride, the beautiful and ass-kicking Governor Elaine Marley-Threepwood.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Adventure games have languished somewhat on the PC of late, with even top-notch, excellent efforts like *Gabriel Knight 3* falling short in sales. However, the belly-laugh humor and incredibly high production values that have marked the *Monkey Island* series should easily reach out to the mainstream. Under development by many of the same folks who made *Grim Fandango* and *Sam & Max*, this latest *Monkey Island* promises to be a real treat.



■ Elaine Marley-Threepwood, the beautiful and ass-kicking Governor, is carried away by a large, muscular pirate



■ Space flight has never been as detailed — or as beautiful — as in *Freelancer*. It's a good thing it's attractive because you'll be spending a lot of time out among the stars

Freelancer

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Digital Anvil
Release Date: Q2 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

This epic space trading sim promises to redefine the genre, offering players the opportunity to become a trader, a pirate, or maybe a combination of both. The catch? The game's living universe reacts to your presence in a believable fashion. Simply breathtaking graphics help to highlight the awesome scope of the gameplay as well.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

No console space flight game has ever come close to the scope or beauty of *Freelancer*. Anyone that's seen the game in motion — fan of the genre or not — has been entranced by the majesty of the world presented to them. When you take this kind of eye candy and marry it to this kind of auspicious game design, you have a title that will not only dominate its niche, but more than likely break out and capture serious mainstream appeal.

■ The Halo engine is capable of some of the most breathtaking 3D graphics yet

Halo

Publisher: Bungie
Developer: Bungie
Release Date: September 2000

WHAT'S THE GAME?

Set inside an enormous, ring-shaped artificial world, *Halo* uses both first- and third-person perspectives as you take part in a war between humankind and alien invaders. The game offers both indoor and outdoor environments, and a mix of infantry and vehicle-based combat.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

In a word, this game is *beautiful*. *Halo* boasts one of the most intricate and downright pretty 3D engines ever devised. Add to this a unique selection of alien weaponry, ground and air combat from a variety of craft, and a fully scripted storyline, and you've got a breathtaking single player game. Then, throw in some thoughtful team-based multiplayer options, and you've got an instant classic in the making: one with mass-market appeal.

■ Vehicle combat is one of *Halo*'s more unique features: multiple players can each take one position as driver, shotgun, or gunner

■ In addition to the three warring factions, there are indigenous life forms to reckon with, such as this mammoth-type creature

Giants: Citizen Kabuto

Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Planet Moon
Release Date: Q3 2000

WHAT'S THE GAME?

Best described as a futuristic, fantasy-based, 3D RTS, *Giants* features a three-way power struggle between a race of aquatic, blue, toothless (huzzah!) sorceresses, a whole mess of tech-savvy aliens with serious firepower, and one enormous, gigantic, really huge monster who really just wants to be left alone, even if it means he has to single-handedly eat everyone on the planet.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Have you seen the screens? It's gorgeous, it's from some of the same people who did the original MDK, and it boasts the same potent blend of polished, creative gameplay, bizarre personality, and unique art design. This is all complemented by online multiplayer and a soundtrack by Mark Snow (*X-Files*).

Max Payne

Publisher: Gathering of Developers
Developer: Remedy/3D Realms
Release Date: When it's done

WHAT'S THE GAME?

A nearly photorealistic, third-person, 3D action adventure in which players control an undercover DEA agent with subtly *Matrix*-like special abilities. Max has been framed for murder and finds himself caught in the middle between both the mob and the police. The game's modern New York setting combines with a film noir-ish atmosphere and ultraviolent John Woo-style action.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

The developers created a next level game engine and replaced standard textures with actual photographs, so the graphics in this game could stop traffic. The game camera is said to utilize lots of cinematic techniques (bullet-cam, for instance), the story is said to be top-notch, and the setting is golden. Is there anyone who doesn't love to play the role of a gritty, wisecracking bad ass?

■ There will probably be a sniper rifle in the game, but Max seems to prefer the "fill 'em full of holes from six feet away" approach

New Legends

Publisher: TED
Developer: Infinite Machine
Release Date: Q2 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

A third-person action adventure game with heavy FPS influences. Built upon the multi-faceted *Ultralord* engine, this good-looking game is set in a near-future China ruled by various warlords. In his quest to free his home province, the player will encounter demons, dragons, and bosses whose alignment with the five elements (earth, wind, fire, water, and metal) gives them unique powers.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Infinite Machine co-founders Justin Chin and Che-yuan Wang worked on the masterful *Jedi Knight*, as did much of their development team. The story sounds as solid as the one Chin created for *Jedi*, and the blending of ancient Chinese mysticism and modern firepower should complement both setting and gameplay. Chin also wants to expand upon the former title's already excellent melee combat model.



■ Players can meet online and be taken through a module by a Game Master

Interplay Games Inc. 4111 16th St. North

1600 W. 16th St. 1600 W. 16th St. North

Interplay Games Inc. 4111 16th St. North

Neverwinter Nights

Publisher: Interplay

Developer: Bioware

Release Date: Q2 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

This Dungeons and Dragons RPG has been designed to foster the same type of play as a pen and paper session — small groups and adventures that last a few hours at a time. It includes more than 20 different modules, as well as a comprehensive and easy to use editor which enables players to post user-created mods to the net. Neverwinter represents the next step in Bioware's roleplaying legacy with new third edition rules, a new 3D graphics engine, and a refined interface.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Every time we see this game it gets more beautiful than the last by a factor of two — and there are still nine more months of development. The secret to the game's success, however, won't be in the luscious visuals but in the staggering number of adventures that will ship with the game. Even after those are exhausted, the easy to use development tools and open-ended nature of the product guarantees that we'll see user made modules popping up in virtually no time. The question is, with a game that you can play forever, how does Bioware plan to sell us the next one?

■ The graphics in Neverwinter Nights outshine those of any other RPG to date. Even user-made levels will look this good, due to the easy to use game editor

Origin (formerly Ultima Worlds)

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Origin

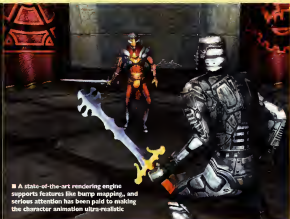
Release Date: Q3 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

The second incarnation of Origin's groundbreaking, massively multiplayer Ultima Online, Origin has been freed from its humble 2D beginnings and spun out into a whole new world.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

The original Ultima Online was a noble experiment that was never wholly successful, but with this update, developer Origin may very well surpass even Verant's Everquest in terms of beauty, player options, and chances for player interaction. New classes, completely original NPC creatures, a new method of gaining levels and skills (which requires you to find a master to teach you at higher levels), and a world which is twice as big as Ultima Online.



■ A state-of-the-art rendering engine supports features like bump mapping, and serious attention has been paid to making the character animation ultra-realistic

20 GAMES that will save the PC

Republic

Publisher: **Edios**
Developer: **Blair Studios**
Release Date: **Q1 2001**

WHAT'S THE GAME?

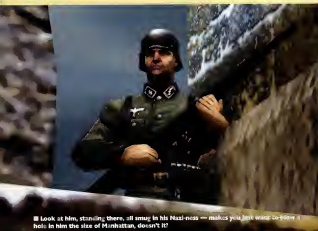
A fully 3D, political domination simulation in which players must network, strongarm, and otherwise gain influence over people, starting as a small fish in a small town but eventually becoming leader of Novistrana, a fifty-city strong fictional republic once part of the Soviet Union. Of course, 16 other organizations (and the current president) all want to be king of the hill as well.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Here's a number for you one million. That's how many individual people live in Novistrana. There are also rows and rows of buildings, each modeled right down to the laundry hanging over the balcony. This engine is a complete monster, and with designer Dennis Hassaba's pedigree — he worked with Peter Molyneux on *Theme Park World*, *Dungeon Keeper*, and (briefly) *Black & White* — Republic promises to offer a depth of simulation today's games only dream about.



■ The game's engine is staggeringly advanced. You can start from this view and zoom in close enough to count the petals on a daisy in one of those apartment's window boxes.



■ Look at him, standing there, all snug in his Nazi nose — makes you just want to blow a hole in him the size of Manhattan, doesn't it?



■ What evil Nazi stronghold would be complete without a few gruesome, super-Nazi zombie experiments going on!

Return to Castle Wolfenstein

Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Gray Matter**
Release Date: **Q3 2001**

WHAT'S THE GAME?

The original first-person shooter makes a, well, return. Using the Quake III engine, this new *Wolfenstein* puts you back in the boots of commando William Blazkowicz, fighting your way out of a Nazi stronghold deep in the heart of WWII Germany. The catch? The castle is the base of Himmler's nefarious experiments to develop an army of undead zombie soldiers.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Combining both nostalgia and cutting edge technology, *Wolfenstein* is gunning for the mainstream. Developer Gray Matter knows its stuff, and the teasing bits of gameplay seen so far offer a tantalizing combination of straight up FPS action and more Thel'like stealth. The enemy's AI includes nasty little routines like picking up your grenades and throwing them back at you, or laying down cover fire for a comrade. Numerous objects in the environment can be picked up and manipulated, and in a macabre touch, dead bodies stay right where they fell and can be dragged to less conspicuous places. And besides, who doesn't get a thrill out of gunning down Nazis?



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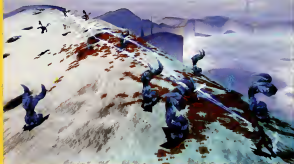
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the scene: where to go & what to do

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20 GAMES that will save the PC

■ It's hard not to get caught staring at the unique unit designs, but the threat of being charred by a lightning bolt should help you focus.



Sacrifice

Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Shiny Entertainment
Release Date: Q4 2000

WHAT'S THE GAME?

A 3D, fantasy RTS that borrows much from Electronic Arts' classic *Archon & Players* control a wizard in service to one of five warring gods, each of whom is aligned with a certain element (Fire, Water, Earth, Life, Death). The number of units you command and spells you learn depends heavily upon how many enemy units you sacrifice at their altar.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Shiny games are usually pretty, but this one is incredible, one of few titles visually on par with Interplay's other fantasy RTS, *Gladius*. The eye candy is deep too, with 55 otherworldly units, 55 different spells, and five visually arresting battle worlds. The elemental theme lends itself well to the epic feel, and the included map editor and planned multiplayer support will do nothing but add tremendous replay value.

Shadowbane

Publisher: Gathering of Developers
Developer: Wolfpack
Release Date: Q2 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

This massively multiplayer online RPG isn't taking the route followed by the rest of the pack. Its biggest twist? Players aren't safe from one another and are actually going to have to flock together for mutual safety/profit. Social structures play a big part in the game with guilds being able to occupy towns and build them up while others lay siege to cities they want to capture.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Wolfpack is creating virtual fantasy worlds in *Shadowbane* that will be shaped primarily by the players that inhabit them (and don't worry, the designers have compensated for the fact that everybody will probably be selfish and mean). The new player-vs-player based gameplay dynamic (with guild cities to hold/siege) should enable new levels of player interaction. With 40+ player classes and 10+ races, it's no surprise that *UD* players turned *IQ* hardcore are already viewing this one as the next big thing.



■ One guild attempts to slow an invading army by taking out their siege engines. No other online experience is even attempting combat on this scale.



■ It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood — but one that could quickly turn into a nightmare if you're choosy. It's the beauty of the system, really.

SimsVille

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Maxis
Release Date: Q2 2001

WHAT'S THE GAME?

Coming out hard on the heels of the phenomenally (and deservedly) successful *The Sims*, Maxis' latest promises to find the perfect balance between the metropolis building of *SimCity* and the human interaction of *The Sims*, enabling you to build and develop a small neighborhood.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

Oh, come on. *The Sims* and the various incarnations of *SimCity* have sold millions upon millions. They remain the one category of games that appeal to just about everyone, and there's no reason to believe *SimsVille* will be any different. Think of the urban planning of *SimCity* combined with the hopes, the dreams, and the personality of *The Sims*, and you get the idea. Can you think of anyone who wouldn't want to play this game?

Team Fortress 2

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Valve
Release Date: TBA (2004)

WHAT'S THE GAME?

The "sequel" to the most playable Quake, then *Half-Life* MOD, which pits teams of players against each other in highly competitive, and extremely imaginative ways. Missions include protecting a "president" from assassination, capture the flag, and taking and defending waypoints on the map.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

If the original *Half-Life* *Team Fortress* showed anything, it's that developer Valve understands multiplayer FPS dynamics better than almost anyone. *TF2* will add numerous new "classes," including Engineers for building gun emplacements, and Rangers who can carry wounded players to the nearest medic. If you only play one multiplayer game this year (or next year, or whenever Valve gets it finished), you'll want this one bad.

New character types like Rangers and Engineers will make *Team Fortress 2* an even more strategic multiplayer experience. Other new enhancements will include a Parametric Animation system, and voice communication over the net.



Tribes 2

Publisher: Havas
Developer: Dynamix
Release Date: Q4 2000

WHAT'S THE GAME?

This multiplayer-only shooter differentiates itself with huge outdoor environments, ground and air-based vehicles to commandeer, and a setup that is conducive to team play. What makes the series so exciting is that it's actually possible for lower bandwidth players to stay competitive, thanks to incredibly tight network coding.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

While consoles are just taking their fledgling steps into online, titles like *Tribes 2* are already on the second evolution of gameplay and technology. This time, there's a much stronger emphasis on getting teammates to work together in a coordinated manner that should promote a great player community. Add the return of the jetpack, which enables you to fly around the levels at will (and is still shockingly absent from other similar games) and the ability to custom outfit your characters, and you have gameplay mechanics that are significantly different from anything else on the market.



The sprawling outdoor environments in *Tribes 2* are a far cry from the typical Quake and Unreal engine attempts.

Warcraft 3

Publisher: Havas
Developer: Blizzard
Release Date: Christmas 2000

WHAT'S THE GAME?

Real time strategy set in a fantasy universe. Unlike Blizzard's previous efforts, however, this game features a full 3D engine and includes many character building RPG elements as well. Notably, the ante has been upped again with a total of five playable races that are all completely different.

WHY IT WILL SAVE THE PC:

It's from Blizzard, so it's likely to be in development for a while, but odds are it will be perfect on arrival. Five races should bring more replayability to the game than even the old champion *Starcraft*, and the concept of heroes adds just enough roleplaying to the otherwise impersonal RTS genre to keep it fresh. Visually, the game already shines, and with Battle.net support built in, this title has the potential to become the fastest selling RTS game ever.



Warcraft 3 adds many roleplaying elements to the genre, like quests and level advancement.

→ Finals

More quirky but lovable Dreamcast games, more big PlayStation RPGs, and two major PC titles that fall short — one a tragic disappointment, one a predictable waste



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Gauntlet Legends	90
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■ With a full party of vampires loaded for bear, nothing should stand in your way. Too bad all of your friends are as dumb as rocks.

Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Nihilistic

Eww... does this blood taste sour to you?

■ Some of the creatures in Vampire are unsettling. That demonic beast will literally chew up your characters and spit them out.



This new visual feast of a game combines the sword-and-sorcery appeal of traditional RPGs such as Baldur's Gate with gothic horror and mystery. The single-player game centers on Christof Romuuld, a crusader whose love for a nun, Anezka, robs him of his faith, leaving him open to the preying vampires of medieval Prague. Yet Christof holds to this forbidden love, because it

becomes the only thing tying him to his humanity, and this is what drives Redemption's excellent story. Across 1,000 years and two continents, Christof pursues Anezka as she becomes a pawn in the schemes of a dark vampire lord. In the process, he learns what it is to exist beyond mortals as a hunter of human prey.

As a young vampire, Christof has few abilities, but in the course of the game, you decide



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The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at Next Generation will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★ Revolutionary
★★★★ Excellent
★★★☆☆ Good
★★☆☆☆ Fair
★☆☆☆☆ Bad

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product

BLOODSUCKERS LOVE COMPANY

Slipping along with *Redemption* is a multiplayer game that, while early, shows a great deal of promise. You can use a level and script editor to design your own scenarios, and pass them for others to play through in groups of up to six people. A Storyteller (game master) can run the custom adventures personally for better minute-to-minute management of the story, but if everyone wants to play, then events can be prescripted.

The ability to create characters of any vampire clan, as well as humans, makes the multiplayer experience extremely attractive. Players can design characters from any of the game's time periods, creating weird mystical encounters or very realistic shoot 'em ups. Hopefully this will be the feature that keeps Vampire fans happy, especially because the single-player game isn't fully worked out.

what skills and disciplines (the vampire version of magic) to pursue. There are no levels per se, just experience points to allocate to different abilities. A look at the different games in progress around the office revealed a huge variety of characters, each of them wildly varying in focus. While one Christof was a raging tank, covered in artillery and machine guns, another was learning the black magic of the snake people, forgoing weapons entirely for the ability to summon serpents and grow armor-like scales.

Whatever form Christof takes, both he and his world are staggeringly beautiful. The

graphics engine is easily the best in any PC RPG, providing breathtaking vistas, realistic cities, and startling character animation.

However, once the gleam of the eye candy, gripping storyline, and customizable characters starts to wear off, *Redemption* disappoints as the real gameplay begins. It was obviously rushed out the door to meet an artificial deadline and, in doing so, nihilistic made the fatal trilogy of RPG errors: poor AI, maddeningly difficult levels, and console-esque save points.

The AI-controlled enemies are basic and dumb, while party members act unforgivably stupid and even suicidal — without

■ This mural is a fine example of the absolutely fantastic art throughout the game.



painstaking guidance, your allies wander from the party and get killed, even by something as silly as a nice patch of sunlight. Even when they do stay together, there's little chance that Christof and crew will actually go toe-to-toe with the enemy vampires — they're too strong and are encountered too frequently, causing you to resort to

EverQuest-style tactics, such as baiting creatures and running to a safe area to fight. If those safe areas are too far apart — as is frequently the case — the game becomes maddening. It autosaves between levels, but dying at the hands of an unexpected boss and having to retrace an hour-long level are still common occurrences. — Daniel Erickson



■ When the blood gets scarce, it is sometimes necessary to feed off your own party. Luckily, this is New York and nobody pays attention to such things.



■ The older a vampire gets, the stronger he becomes. This guy is really old, really strong, and, unfortunately, really grouchy.

■ Sometimes the ol' fangs aren't going to get the job done, so it's time for Christof to become a walking arsenal.

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: This is perhaps a couple of well-designed patches away from being a five-star game, but right now its rushed feel and numerous flaws and bugs drain it of its vampiric charm.

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WHEN PORTING IS A GOOD THING

If *Rainbow Six* requires too much thinking and planning for your taste, you might want to check out some of the other PC shooters making the jump to the Dreamcast in the coming months. Among the top titles are *Quake III: Arena*, *Tournament*, *Half-Life* and *Soldier of Fortune*. These fast-paced shooters should all make excellent conversions.

■ The game is more about the planning and execution of a mission, rather than the actual fighting

■ Dreamcast

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six

■ Publisher: Majesco ■ Developer: Left Field Productions

A welcome assault on Dreamcast shooters

Long touted as one of the most realistic action/strategy games in existence, Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six* has finally landed on Dreamcast. Running under WindowsCE, this seamless PC port (sadly, minus the multiplayer options) looks

absolutely fantastic.

Those who have played *Rainbow Six* know to expect a mission-based first-person shooter featuring painfully realistic combat that can end with one well-aimed shot in the head. For those who've never seen this on the PC, prepare yourself for time-sensitive military operations in a variety of settings and terrain. The best thing about this game is the amount of control you have over the action. You take tactical command of a team of counter-terrorist operatives and lead them through the assigned missions from beginning to end. You pick from a team of operatives, basing your choice on their individual skills, matching up their strengths and weaknesses with mission

objectives. Once you've chosen the squad, you control everything from arming them to the overall attack plan to issuing orders, and ensuring that you reach your goal without losing any operatives.

That can be tough, as the crafty enemies don't simply stand around waiting for you to sneak up and shoot them. In fact, the tiniest mistake can get your team slaughtered. As a result, the gameplay is slower, tenser, and ultimately extremely satisfying. The game retains the same 17 unique missions from the PC version and also includes four missions from the *Eagle Watch* expansion pack, as well as 27 all-

ENextGen★★★★☆

Bottom Line: An impressive PC translation that Dreamcast owners should certainly consider owning.



■ In *Rainbow Six*, you can use the diverse terrain to your advantage



new training missions.

Although the PC version's multiplayer modes are MIA, *Rainbow Six* is a welcome addition to the list of PC titles currently making their way to Dreamcast, and a breath of fresh air for a console lacking high-quality action games aimed at a more mature audience.

— Garrett Kenyon

■ The 3D graphics are beautifully rendered and rival those in the most realistic Dreamcast titles

● Samba De Amigo

■ Platform: **DC**
■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Senio Team**



■ *Samba is one of the ultimate party games (if only because you all have to chip in to afford it)*

Rhythm-action games may never take off here in the States, but that hasn't stopped Japan from constant innovation in this highly playable subgenre. The latest in quirky gameplay comes in the form of two maracas you plug into your console and shake according to the rhythm of the music and patterns on the screen. It's simple, it's wonderfully abstract, and it's incredibly fun.

What makes this game so

much better than its 'frankie' cousins, however, is the low entry barrier. Beginners can quickly get the hang of using the maracas, and later levels keep experienced players challenged for quite a long time. This is one game that appeals to just about anyone, and even nongamers eagerly lined up for a try whenever we got it out of the box.

So, has Sega stumbled on the universal game? Almost, but the cost is a sticking point. An import copy and one set of maracas typically cost around \$260 — and the game is much more fun when two players each have their own set. We expect the game to come out in the U.S. at a third of that price, but we're pondering how accessible such a pricey game will be to the mass market it will clearly enthrall. — *Blake Fischer*

→ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: It's different, it's wacky, and it's insanely fun. Just shake your Maracas and watch the monkey dance — that's all you need.

Gauntlet Legends

■ Platform: **DC**
■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Midway**



■ *Four players, generators, keys, and monsters by the ton — yup, it's Gauntlet Legends*

Old legends never die, but they do get remade. Midway's arcade hit Gauntlet Legends spawned a lackluster PlayStation version, a surprisingly decent N64 edition, and now, a solidly fun and often-wonderful Dreamcast version.

This 3D, isometric action-adventure game blends elements of the original coin-op and the more recent arcade sequel, Gauntlet Dark Legends. One to four players can select one of eight medieval-style

characters, including a bomb-chucking jester and a hardy dwarf, to explore a series of monster-laden worlds on a quest to destroy a demon.

Balancing arcade play with RPG elements, Legends makes a superb party game. While the one-player mode is perfectly fine, the amount of fun increases proportionately to the number of onscreen heroes. There's some slowdown during the more frenzied battles, but this hardly detracts from the overall experience. The graphics are a little blocky though, and are just shy of arcade perfect.

However, some may take issue with the game's single-minded play style, which requires hunting for keys, storming in and clearing out monsters, then repeating this ad nauseum. — *Greg Orlando*

→ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Four controllers and one Legends make for party-game excitement of the highest order.

■ DC Space Channel 5

■ Publisher: **Sega of America** ■ Developer: **Sega of Japan**

Now is the time on Dreamcast when we dance



■ *Space Channel 5 consistently nails '80s retro ambience — you half expect Burt Bacharach to come sailing out onto the screen at any moment*

→ Sega's *Space Channel 5*, a terminally hip, ultra-quirky, Polka-style rhythm game pits the cute heroine Ulala against a series of fat-bodied aliens who attempt to conquer humanity by infecting us with boogie fever. Liberating Earth comes down to our heroine's ability to follow the aliens' dance moves — only her swinging hips can save us all.

The gameplay is simple: Ulala must ape her opponents' moves. The Dreamcast D-pad controls her physical movements (up, down, left, right), while two action buttons enable her to blast aliens or free enslaved humans from mind control. It's all very straightforward, but a Modin' set of rewards and punishments (combined with zany gameplay) keep things moving with grace and style.

A frantic pace and gorgeous graphics are the game's hallmarks. Ulala sinks her way through a series of space-themed environments that burst with color and life. All the character models border on the fantastic — and then repeatedly cross that border. Backing all this up is a thick, pulsing, retro-'80s pop beat that properly

echoes Ulala's high-stepping performance. If her dancing sucks like a Hoover, the music drops and warbles; find the cure for the boogie fever, and the tunes hum and throb cheerily. Guest dancers can be added to Ulala's posse, including the famed Michael Jackson. The whole effect is rather like Peter Max on a sugar overdose.

Fans of 80-hour epics will sour on *Space Channel 5*'s limited gameplay; the whole game can be finished within a few hours (maybe five or so), and there are only a few scant secret areas to be found.



■ *Ah, sweet Ulala. No wonder Sega has tapped her to be the mascot for SegaNet: she does have a certain appeal*

Worse still, there's no multiplayer mode, and Ulala must fill out this gorgeous dance by her lonesome self. — *Greg Orlando*



■ *The idea is simple: shoot the aliens, dehypnotize the humans, and keep dancing to the beat*

→ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Beautiful and all-too-short, *Space Channel 5* nonetheless got us all steppin' and swayin' to that crazy beat.

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■ Dreamcast

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

■ Publisher: Game Arts ■ Developer: Treyarch

Still the best



■ One more time: *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* is the best skateboarding game ever made, and one of the best games you can buy period.

→ Tony Hawk, the star of the skateboarding opus *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, floats through the air with the greatest of ease. Already a new classic hit on the Sony PlayStation and Nintendo 64, *Pro Skater* returns for an equally magnificent Dreamcast rendering that's one part breathless 3D action and one part religious experience. For those who've been living under a rock, Hawk is the best skateboarding game ever produced. You get to run Tony or some of his skateboarding cronies through a series of masterfully designed tracks and environments, performing mad tricks and stunts in an attempt to score big points. As challenges are mastered, new courses and contests are unlocked; characters can also modify their equipment and increase their skills. A brilliant control scheme enables

different tricks to be performed with combinations of button presses and D-Pad tags. Players can perform a variety of rail grinds and kick and grab stunts, and stringing these moves together soon progresses from challenge to obsession.

The Dreamcast version has been beefed up to include more potent graphics than its predecessors. Everything else, including a blaring, homering soundtrack and a challenging two-player mode, remains intact. Though some may fault this edition for being a strict port with a few fineries thrown in, the breathless feel you get sending Hawk (or his comrades) off a ramp and into the deliciously free air spinning and twirling before returning to terra firma, is unmatched by any other title in the videogame world. — Greg Ortado

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Hawk soars. End of story.

Deep Fighter

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■ Developer: Criterion Studios

Imagine that one fateful day you learn that a comet is heading directly for Earth and will destroy the entire planet in one hour. You spend the next 60 minutes fretting over your fate, thinking of all the things you did wrong, and generally fearing what lies ahead. Well, the truth is, you'd probably derive more pleasure out of that one torturous hour than you would playing *Deep Fighter*.

This game takes you into an underwater world where civilization is fighting for survival against a slew of deep-sea pirates and creatures. The goal is to help your Defense Force build the Leviathan, a mothership that will carry your people to safety. You accomplish this by

completing 36 missions, from collecting radioactive rocks and important fish to defending your base against attackers. There are eight different deep-sea vehicles to pilot, each one with different weapons and tools, and eight bosses to conquer some of whom actually look intimidating. However, when you get down to the actual battles, you realize the fighting skills of the bosses are plan nonexistent. Even the final boss, a giant squid-like creature, does little more than float there while you shoot at it.



■ It doesn't look too bad, but *Deep Fighter's* major distinguishing feature is its ability to make you yawn.

Despite a few points of minor interest, *Deep Fighter* is so slow-paced and dull, only insomniacs need apply. — Garrett Kinyon

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A boring drag of a game that will surely kill you to sleep if you manage to keep from killing yourself first.

Fur Fighters

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Acclaim ■ Developer: Bizarre Creations

Occasionally a game comes along that looks as if it was made strictly for kiddies, but still manages to catch the eye of even the most jaded adult gamers. Even if you're not a fan of fluffy and colorful games, you still might want to check out *Fur Fighters*.

In this third-person shooter, you play as any of the six Fur Fighters — gun-toting stuffed animals on a quest to rescue their families from the Evil General Vigo. Along the way you shoot it out with Vigo's army of bears and other sinister stuffed animals. Each character has its own unique attacks and a special ability that corresponds with the type of critter they are. A warp chamber enables you to switch between characters, and each 3D level has its own theme, where

everything down to the enemies' clothing lends itself to the motif. There's also a multiplayer mode where you can battle it out head-to-head in a "Ruff Match."

The only problem with *Fur Fighters* is the difficulty of aiming your weapon. The reticle is in the center of the screen, and moving it also changes the camera angle, so it's sometimes hard to quickly target an enemy. You'll improve with practice, but it can be a tad bit frustrating, especially when an enemy is directly in front of you and your own character is blocking the view. Still, the most enjoyable thing



■ *Fur Fighters* may look offensively cute, but don't let that put you off its interesting and absorbing gameplay.

about *Fur Fighters* is the characters. Hailing the cute little animals basking, scamper, and blow away other cute little animals will put a smile on anyone's face. — Garrett Kinyon

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A game that's fun for kids and adults alike. It looks great and plays even better.

Grand Theft Auto 2

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Rockstar ■ Developer: DMA Design

With the original *Grand Theft Auto* players moaned that the game was fun, but that the choppy framerate and bad graphics killed the gameplay. Well, now we have a version with better graphics and a much better framerate — and now we're thinking those may not have been the only problems.

It seems like it should be fun: you play your average street thug moving up the ranks by stealing cars (sometimes just ripping the driver out of the seat and hopping in), committing crimes, and otherwise making yourself into the biggest, baddest SOB in town. Unfortunately for some reason, the gameplay doesn't quite live up to the premise.

Maybe it's the control, which is wonky enough to drive you mad sometimes. Or maybe it's the fact that the city is so freakin' huge and vaguely defined that you never feel like you're anything but lost. Whatever it is, it's impossible to play this game for long periods of time without getting bored and/or frustrated.

This should be a blast, but lots of little irritations keep it from ever quite reaching the "entertaining" stage. You might want to rent this just to see



■ *GTA 2* looks better than *GTA*, but the gameplay is about the same — which is the problem.

what a hellous life of crime is like, but *GTA 2* doesn't have the staying power to keep you coming back. — Blake Fischer

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A great idea that, for one reason or another, never really gets into a must-play game.



■ Nintendo 64

Excitebike 64

■ Publisher: Nintendo of America ■ Developer: Left Field Productions

High-Flying Excitement

■ It takes a lot of hard work, but eventually players can unlock Excite 3D — the original Excitebike using the updated game engine.



When it comes to high-flying motocross excitement, very little can compare to Nintendo's excellent *Excitebike 64*, especially for this system. It features 20 different tracks, alternating between indoor arenas and outdoor cross-country races. Each track contains a plethora of secrets, shortcuts, and tricks. In order to unlock them all, you have to beat a series of Season challenges, starting with the Novice difficulty on the Bronze round. Once you place first over

a series of five tracks, you unlock the Silver round, then the Amateur difficulty, and so on.

In addition to unlocking tracks in a very challenging single-player mode, you can race with as many as three friends in split-screen multiplayer. Also, the game boasts a variety of special tracks, such as the Desert course, which is generated on the fly, so you can travel in one direction forever and never reach the end of the sandy dunes. Additionally, you can practice mid-air acrobatics on a stunt course, or play some highly entertaining

soccer, pushing around a giant soccer ball with your motorcycles.

The physics of the game are spectacular — you get awesome air over jumps, and with a well-timed blast of the turbo button,

you'll get even higher. As in the original *Excitebike*, you maintain speed when you land on both tires, and slow down when you land on either your front wheel or your back wheel first.

— Michael Wolf

THE ORIGINAL, TOO!

One of the coolest special levels in the game has to be the original *Excitebike*, which is unlocked when you complete the tutorial. The original NES game is still fun, and even more fun when you eventually unlock *Excite 3D*: the original NES game play using the new 3D engine.

ENextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: With all the secrets and special tracks, not to mention the realistic physics that'll make you wince during crashes, this is one motocross racing game that will entertain for hours on end.



■ The magic system in *Chrono Cross* is complex enough to give the game variety, but easy enough for anyone to figure out.



■ Even though the world is pre-rendered, it's so lavishly detailed that you won't care.

■ PlayStation

Chrono Cross

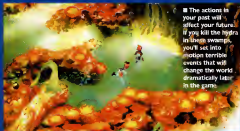
■ Publisher: Square/EA ■ Developer: Squaresoft

The worlds are not enough



The original *Chrono Trigger* was an elite entry into the wide field of 16-bit RPGs. With its time

traveling, fast-paced story, innovative combat systems, and great graphics, it was everything an RPG fan desired. Now, its



■ The actions in your past will affect your future. If you kill the hydro in their swamp, you'll set into motion terrible events that will change the world dramatically later in the game.

BACK IN TIME

Much like the original *Chrono Trigger*, your actions in *Chrono Cross* can define the landscape of the game's future. While this may be something that adds to replay value, there's honestly nothing more frustrating than realizing you could have found Object X, if only you'd thought to bring a particular character with you 10 hours ago. Still, as far as replayability goes, this aspect adds a lot. People who love to play through RPGs more than once (creaky, but we know they exist) will be thrilled with all of the possible permutations.

sequel shines with the same rare gloss of design and beauty.

You play Serge, a young boy traveling between parallel realities, trying to figure out why he's been blessed (or cursed) with this ability. Along the way, you meet dozens of NPCs and can recruit up to 40 into your party (though you can only have three active at once). Yet this ambitious number comes at a price: there are simply too many characters to choose from, and, as a result, it's impossible to develop a meaningful, singular story. (On the bright side, this element does lend an insane amount of replayability.)

Ultimately, the game stutters because, where *Chrono Trigger* drew you in and then kept going at a breakneck speed, 10 hours into *Chrono Cross* you still won't

know where the story is going. It provides the obligatory dramatic moments, but many just aren't moving since you never really feel attached to the characters.

Despite its problems, this is an otherwise spectacular RPG. Combat is original and (gasp!) fun, with a new magic system that ties into the melee much better than in any other RPG. It's also aesthetically superb, with some truly breathtaking visuals and a beautiful musical score.

Ultimately, *Chrono Cross* has all the pieces of a perfect RPG; they just don't quite fit together with the precision of a masterpiece. Much like *Final Fantasy VIII*, all the innovation and production value stall because the story and characters fail to grab you. — Blake Fischer

E!NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: The production values are second-to-none and the game is as playable as any other on the market. Yet, it lacks a certain emotional "zing" found in its predecessor.



■ If your timing's right, you can chain attacks together and execute powerful combos

■ PlayStation

The Legend of Dragoon

■ Publisher: Sony ■ Developer: Sony

The best *Final Fantasy* game that wasn't

➔ *The Legend of Dragoon* is a blatant attempt by Sony to clone Square's legendary *Final Fantasy* series.

The good thing is, they nailed it.

The main character is Dart, a young warrior determined to hunt down the "Black Monster" responsible for the death of his parents. His quest uncovers ominous connections between seemingly unrelated events — a friend's kidnapping, the re-emergence of dragons, and the

amazing discovery that Dart (and, as it turns out, plenty of his friends and enemies) can morph into a winged, spell-casting badass known as a Dragoon.

Graphically, *Dragoon* is easily on par with *FFVIII*, with gorgeous backgrounds, huge characters, and lavish spell effects (which, as in *FFVIII*, can't be bypassed). Kudos to the visual-design team, which created a vibrant world full of believable, visually arresting characters. Combat

itself is turn-based, and gets a nice bit of complexity thanks to elemental affinities (fire-based characters do poorly against water-based ones, yadda yadda) and a *Vagrant Story*-like attack system that enables you to chain

multiple assaults with timely button presses.

In fact, the only major flaw is the story, which doesn't evoke as much emotion as it could — ironically enough, one more way this apes *FFVIII*. — Eric Bratcher

HOW TO BREED A HIT IN THREE GAMES OR LESS

While *Legend's* overall resemblance to the *FF* series might be attributable to similar solutions for similar problems, certain elements of the game are highly suspect. Dart and Sheva are dead ringers for *FFVIII's* Cloud and Tifa, right down to their early relationship. The long, unbreakable spell effects are especially reminiscent of *FFVII*, and the role of guardian forces is neatly filled in *Legend* by the characters themselves, since they can only use magic after transforming into fantastic super-warriors. Ironically, the Dragons themselves bear little resemblance to the high-jumping, spear-armed warriors that Square calls "dragons." That probably would have been too obvious.



■ To clarify, the winged people are Dragons and the giant lizards are dragons

ENextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A vast, majestic game that emulates the weaknesses of *FFVIII* as well as the strengths. Still, it's a fantastic title with an incredibly compelling concept.

Surf Riders

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **ACOT**



■ This is *Surf Riders* — smart surfers will head straight for the lip of the wave

There hasn't been a really fun surfing game since *California Games* on Lynx (see *Buildings* preview, page 52) — until now. Taking the same basic perspective as the *Exotic* classic — a front view of an impossibly uniform and perfect wave — you do tricks, ride in the tube, and leap off the lip of the wave to do 360's (and more). The structure is basic: you're scored on variety, endurance, and trick difficulty through several heats, moving on to new beaches around the world. Each beach has different waves, from tiny (Japan) to

enormous (Iceland), and requires different strategy (and a different board selection — trick boards, speed boards, etc.).

In a lot of ways, *Surf Riders* seems like a throwback to the good old days of *ColecoVision* — in part because the character graphics are simplistic and tiny (and 2D sprites). The game's totally uncensored (player and board names are made up, although they bear a slight resemblance to current surfers), and it's not especially deep. *Surf Riders* is basically a one-trick pony: Lucky that trick is pretty addictive, and as with the best classic games, you'll find yourself playing again and again — not to get to the end, or unlock secret characters, but just for the pure fun of beating your high score.

With decent wave effects, animation, sound, and control, *Surf Riders* may not be *Tony Hawk* on the water, but it's well worth your time. — Chris Charla

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Ultimately, it's too limited to earn another star, but it is unquestionably addictive as hell.

Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **Sony of Japan**



■ *Covert Ops* proves *Resident Evil*-style gameplay went wrong in a game that's pure action

While the technique of using preset camera angles and pre-rendered backgrounds can add suspense and a sense of foreboding to a horror game, in an action title like *Covert Ops*, it just becomes frustrating. Having enemies shoot (and often kill) you from off-screen is just a poor design choice, and since the only enemies are brainless soldiers, there's not even a hint of suspense either.

Worse, the numerous

soldiers aren't the primary gameplay obstacle. Most of your time is spent looking for keys to get from one car to the out-of-control nuclear train to the next, while solving the stupidly simple, barely interactive puzzles. For example, there's a bathroom filled with blood in one car. Your options? "Drain bath, yes or no?" There's never a negative effect to saying yes, ever, and draining the bath just reveals another key. Not exactly brain surgery.

Thankfully some above-average action sequences and pretty graphics offset the poor gameplay. Unfortunately the lack of analog support hurts the very action that could have saved them from mediocrity. Even with a big red target that appears when a weapon is properly targeted on an enemy the D-pad is woefully imprecise. — Daniel Erickson

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

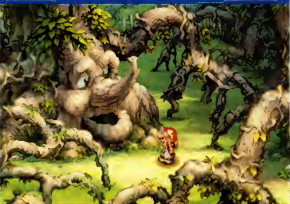
Bottom Line: A good weekend rental with nice graphics but nothing to really sink your teeth into.

PlayStation

Legend of Mana

Publisher: **Square EA LLC** Developer: **Square**

Tomba! meets Square — sans the pigs or the fun



■ Growing fruit in the orchard and having Luf Cactin keep your diary are just two of the 5 million side quests you can mess with

→ Active combat, a binding number of missions, characters, and items, and a unique quasi-customizable map system that Square calls "Land Make" — what more can an RPG fan ask for? Well, as it turns out, quite a bit.

The "sequel" to *Secret of Mana* (actually the third in the series, the second was never released in the U.S.), *Legend* is little more than a spiritual successor. The only real link between the two is the carryover of deities such as Undine, Shade and Salamander. These deities influence the different events that are accessible to you via the Land Make system — which is an innovative feature, but often disrupts the flow of the game.

In fact, *Legend* is more akin to SCEA's *Tomb Raider* series than an RPG. Using only one main character you unlock



■ Starting out with the Land Make system means choosing where to hang your proverbial hat



new missions and areas by combing each town looking for an objective. Stumble across a new scenario and a mission screen pops up, but you receive little or no information on how to complete it. Once in a while, you'll meet an ally to accompany you, but only for a specific purpose, and they invariably leave you once that objective is met.

As you meet different objectives, you're rewarded with Artifacts, which you can then place on the world map to create new towns, dungeons or mazes. This is known as the "Land Make" system, and while it's definitely

an intriguing twist for RPG fans used to the locked locations of most linear adventures, the net effect is to give *Legend* a seriously fragmented feel: the story-based immersion customary to most console RPGs is swapped for a loose, mission-based structure.

This isn't to say that *Legend* doesn't have its merits. The plethora of characters, items, monsters and skills is sure to keep you up at night trying to find them all. But without a solid story framework (or even some evil pig!) there's very little to hold your attention for long. — Francesca Reyes

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Massive, innovative, but ultimately disappointing. Only the most devoted Square fans need apply.



■ There are a lot of different enemies, but none are terribly on/beat or stand out — and you wind up fighting smit, snake-like, monkey, critters (rats, bats, etc.) on every single level

■ PC

Daikatana

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Ion Storm

This is how it ends — not with a bang, but a whimper



Since we're pretty sure most Next Gen readers are aware of Daikatana's development history, we'll take that "as read." The ultimate question, of course, is how is it as

a game? The answer, frankly, is not good. It isn't the worst thing you'll ever play, but the parts that aren't boring are just frustrating.

The graphics are generally OK, looking rather like an above-average Quake II MOD built by someone with a lot of free time and good Photoshop skills. The first level is kind of ugly, but it's set in a swamp, so maybe that's appropriate. The other maps are a little cleaner, and Ancient Greece is actually kinda glossy.

However, the gameplay is the same FPS "shoot enemies, find a switch, open a door" mechanics that were old when this game's engine was new. There are puzzles scattered around, but

Huh?

Daikatana is filled with odd design choices that don't make a whole lot of sense. There's a huge number of different weapons, for example, but you hardly use them since you have to constantly fight using only the Daikatana in order to power up the "big sword." Given that you need to kill things yourself to power up both the sword and your own stats (Attack, Health, etc.), this means your sidekicks are, in essence, robbing you of combat experience and chances to advance. So you mostly wind up ordering them to stay put, clearing the area yourself, then going back to get them (particularly since they have to get caught on ladders or doors) — which means you're practically going it alone, so why have sidekicks in the first place? Odd, just odd.

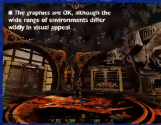
these tend toward the arbitrary rather than the organic: shoot out this pane of glass to proceed, even though every other window in the game is indestructible; shoot these crates to blow open a wall, even though no other crates explode. Every area has some such petty obstacle.

The NPCs and story (touted as the game's major additions to the genre) are flatly disappointing. The sidekicks are mostly good only for shooting you in the back, and can't really be interacted with. The story is uninvolved and (here's that word again) arbitrary.

with horrible dialogue and pointless plot "twists," including an ending that comes out of nowhere.

— Jeff Lundrigan

■ The graphics are OK, although the wide range of environments differ widely in visual appeal



■ You'll find lots of weapons, but many are awkward, including the titular Daikatana, which takes up way too much of the screen, especially when fully powered up

ENextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: This isn't the worst game you'll ever play, but there's precious little fun either. Two years out of its time, Daikatana is notable mostly for its mediocrity.

■ PC

Evolva

■ Publisher: Interplay ■ Developer: Cyanide Arts

Despite some routine gameplay, *Evolva* is a palatable feast for the senses



■ Every time a hunter "evolves," a light show lets you know something good happened

→ It's rare that a game comes along that we can't immediately compare to another title, but to its credit, *Evolva* has a genuinely unique visual style. Since the game is set on an alien planet, the artists and modelers have let their imaginations run wild, creating a lush world of winding tunnels, rich colors, and creepy insects. On a powerful system with a decent 3D card, it's a beautiful game to look at.

The story involves a team of "genohunters" sent to rid a planet of a global parasitic infection. You control one of four hunters at a time, and switching between them is a simple matter of hitting a function key. Four mini-windows at the bottom of the screen keep tabs on the squad, and the HUD is clean and informative. Cycling through your 10 weapons is easy with the mouse wheel, and alt-fire options add a nice variety to the combat.

Evolva's biggest weakness is its uninspired gameplay. Most of the 12 short levels consist of finding the right plant or object needed to open a gate before moving in and killing everything. In the later stages, when your team

becomes quite powerful, destroying everything that moves can be fun, but it does grow routine after a while, and not enough is done to take advantage of the game's potentially interesting squad-based dynamic.

Because of the weird weapons—like a gun that shoots flammable mucus—the multiplayer mode can be fun, but the third-person view isn't very convenient for deathmatches. Still, *Evolva*'s strength is its single-player

■ One of the most interesting weapons is a gun that shoots flammable mucus

game. With its gorgeous graphics, superb soundtrack and intuitive controls, it's a fun addition to any gamer's collection. —Jim Preston



■ Controlling all four genohunters is a simple matter of mastering a few hotkeys

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: The gorgeous graphics and beautiful sound conceal some rather ordinary, if mostly fun, gameplay

Majesty

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: MicroProse ■ Developer: Cyberlore



■ It doesn't play quite like any other real-time strategy game—which makes *Majesty* both a great single-player treat and a bad multiplayer experience

An RTS with a bit of fantasy sm thrown in for spice, *Majesty* plays differently from anything else on the market. Like most RTS games, *Majesty* is about resource management, building armies and defeating all of the bad guys. What sets it apart, though, is that there's never a time when you have direct control over the various units.

Instead of an all-powerful entity, you take the role of the sovereign, giving orders and hoping against hope that enemies will be executed with at least a modicum of efficiency and competence. The tool used to inspire loyalty from unruly subjects is the most obvious

one: money. By labeling monsters, buildings or areas on the map with flags that can be redeemed for gold, you can appeal to your heroes' greed, moving them to face perilous challenges or explore forbidding wilderness.

Even building the infrastructure vital to a kingdom's survival is indirect, although here you have a bit more control. There are a set number of peasants that work on buildings, and as the sovereign you can choose the size where each structure will go. The order in which they're built and repaired, however, is up to the peasant laborers.

At first frustrating to RTS fans used to micromanaging, this unique gameplay formula eventually becomes incredibly natural, enabling large-scale management that wouldn't be possible otherwise. Because of the ease of defending and the difficulty of getting the heroes to launch an organized assault, however, the multiplayer mode tends to result in huge stalemates. —Daniel Erickson

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A great take on a classic formula, only its lack of solid multiplayer keeps *Majesty* out of the top ranks of RTS games.

Tachyon: The Fringe

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Developer: NovaLogic



■ *Tachyon: The Fringe* is an extremely pleasant way to wait around for Freelancer

While not as inventive or frantic as *FreeSpace*, *Tachyon* offers a few new twists on the space-combat formula, including the often sarcastic dialogue between both squad members and enemies. You take the role of Jase Logan (voiced by actor Bruce Campbell), a pilot who gets the short end of the scapegoat stick in a corporate lawsuit. Forced to live out on the fringe of space as a mercenary, you're eventually forced to

choose between the Bora, an independent grassroots group, or GalSpan, a huge corporation. Playing as the Bora is tougher since GalSpan can provide ships and upgrades faster, but the option to play on either side lends replayability.

Graphically this is on par for a modern space-combat sim, although the explosions are spectacular. The sound is a mixed bag: while the voice-acting is mostly top-notch, the sound effects are weak, though the music is appropriate to the space-drama setting, and unobtrusive enough.

Overall, *Tachyon* hits most of the right notes. Although the story starts slowly, the game provides solid single-player fun and decent multiplayer options. But it's nothing you haven't seen before in space. —Kevin Rice

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: This is a solid space-simulation game; it just doesn't offer much in the way of anything new.

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Classic Gaming Expo is an annual celebration of the roots and history of the videogame industry. If your mind's eye can see you as a 10-year-old frantically tearing the reindeer-covered wrapping paper off a package from Santa, revealing an **Atari 2600**, **Intellivision**, **ColecoVision**, or **Vectrex**, then you won't want to miss the show. Classic Gaming Expo is a place where memories such as these run free.

Just a few of the special guests who can be found at Classic Gaming Expo 2000 include Ralph Baer (often referred to as "The Father of Videogames"), Steve Cartwright, Tod Frye, John Harris, Arnie Katz, Bob Polaro, Jay Smith, former Intellivision programmers The Blue Sky Rangers, and dozens more.

Special guests are only a part of what's happening at Classic Gaming Expo 2000. There will be dozens of classic arcade games lining the walls and available for play, scores of vendors offering classic games for sale, game contests and tournaments, keynote speeches and roundtable discussions, and a museum boasting the most comprehensive collection of classic videogame hardware and software ever assembled.

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Writes of Passage

→ I heard that the architectural design of the PlayStation 2 changed for the U.S. launch because of the hard drive bay. Does the PS2 look the same on the outside? Does it still have the beautiful blue PS2 written on the top and the sleek lines and everything? I do not want that beauty to change.

"Alex"

Externally, the U.S. PlayStation 2 will look almost identical to the original Japanese case. The only difference will be that on the back, the PCMCIA slot will be gone, and large drive bay will have taken its place. Everything else about the unit will remain the same.

And while we're on the subject...

→ I'm sorry, but for the life of me I can't determine if the hard drive/modem will be

included with PlayStation 2 for the U.S. launch, or it won't. I've read conflicting reports in the way it's worded in your magazine, both this issue and the last, that to compete with Xbox they intend to launch it here with this included. So, in either case, it will be a peripheral, not inside the machine, and will I get one with my pre-purchase (which I've already done)?

I'd love a little more clarification on the issue, as well as info on the online service Sony will provide, pricing, address, etc.

Chad Smith
Seattle, WA

Although we thought we made things fairly clear in our E3 reports, perhaps Sony's own vagueness about its plans permeated our coverage more than we thought. Just to re-iterate: the hard drive-networking cord module will,

in all probability, not be available for the U.S. launch on October 26. It will be offered at some unannounced time in the future only as an add-on — so no, it will not be covered by your pre-purchase. Most likely it will be offered as a freebie if you sign on with Sony's domestic broadband network, which will be in place "eventually." And, even though "broadband" for an audience of "imaginators" will no doubt be mentioned in every other sentence out of Sony's collective mouth at the time of the U.S. launch, then for the next six months to a year, expect concrete details like a timetable, price, and availability to remain sketchy for the same period of time.

And strictly for the record, Sony is pretty adamant that the addition of the hard drive and modem was not in

response to, nor meant to "compete" with Xbox (snort... um, sorry there).

→ I've been playing games ever since the Sega Master System, and I plan to spend the rest of my life employed somewhere in the game industry, as they truly are my first love. But it seems like something has been missing the last few years, something distinct and important that helped shape and define the video game industry: a truly great console war.

And this is it. Not since the epic Genesis vs. Super Nintendo battle have we seen an all out, genuine war. The two best each other bloody on the fields of the 16-bit utopia, and we, the game players, were the beneficiaries. Saturn vs. PlayStation was a joke; Sega showed up drunk (despite their apparent "lead") to a battle Sony had already won, while the

You call that a game?

In reference to your E3 '00 issue: Are you guys joking? How in the world could *Metal Gear Solid 2* get game of the show? It wasn't even a game! It's obvious that you guys based your decision on graphics and graphics alone because there is absolutely no way you could have played it!

One shouldn't judge games on visuals but on interaction, otherwise it's not a game, it's a movie, and that's what the *Metal Gear Solid 2* video was: a movie. If someone had played it, and it played like crap, it wouldn't get game of the show no matter how good the video is.

Games are an interactive media. Yes, they do combine visuals and sounds, nowadays, but the most important part is the interaction (for proof, think Tetris). So to judge, and basically ignore all the other A-plus titles on the floor, based on visuals or sounds only is just plain wrong. Play them, and then judge.

This is what should have been said: "people were waiting as long as 45 minutes to play *Virtua Tennis*. Samba De Amigo fill in the blank with any playable game." I know the PlayStation MGS was great, but when the second is playable, it will be judged against its peers, and there is no guarantee that it will get game of the show at that time, no matter how good the video looked. It's funny, because when MGS was finally playable a lot of people complained about it, and hated it. I don't even think it got game of the show that year — but they waited for 45 minutes to watch the video, that's for sure.

Cheerio, and keep up the good hype — err — work.

"Andersan"

You make a good point. Nevertheless, playable or not there's no doubt whatsoever that *Metal Gear Solid 2* is a game. Further, no other game on the show floor, or off the show floor, playable or non-playable wowed us — or most everyone else — like this demo did (perhaps more of a comment on how generally

unexciting most other products were this year). And while some people may not have been crazy about the original MGS, we awarded it five stars, and it only sold several million copies. Given that the gameplay of the sequel seems to be nearly identical (albeit with vastly improved graphics and cinematic tricks), it isn't much of a stretch to believe MGS2 will live up to that excitement. True, "If someone had played it, and it played like crap, it wouldn't get game of the show," but that's a prima facie argument based on nothing, like arguing, "If Twinkies tasted like buzzard droppings, no one would buy them." Duh. Twinkies don't taste like buzzard droppings, and the MGS series has a track record of excellence. We stand by the decision.



Who here really thinks *Metal Gear Solid 2* is anything other than a game?

Nintendo 64 has been reserved for the hardcore gamer at best — *Zelda 64* and *Goldeneye* are the only reasons to purchase one.

But now, with the Dreamcast already firmly in place, Nintendo promising not to pull another no-show and the behemoth PS2 looming on the horizon, let's just say that something wicked this way comes. My skin tingles and pulse quickens. The Dreamcast, PS2 and Dolphin all have the capacity to remake what video games are and will be in the future, which is both delicious and frightening at the same time. Games have been great the last couple of years, but it's been a while since I carried a game magazine with me everywhere I went. It's been a while since I canceled cable and put the "Video Games Only" sticker on my television. It's been a while since I listened to video game music in my car. I feel reborn by the energy being generated right now, and it's due to the upcoming battle between Sega and Sony, and here's hoping that Nintendo shows up in time for the title fight.

Ryan Stefanelli

And you didn't even mention Xbox. However, you're right; it's a basic principle of modern economics that competition breeds innovation, and the upcoming four-way battle for the soul of your living room is unprecedented, as is the sheer size of the current videogame audience. The next 18 months to two years are bound to be on exciting, if often chaotic time, and we at NextGen couldn't be looking forward to it more. To quote the immortal bard, "Cry havoc! And let slip the dogs of war..."

→ I was wondering why people are so stupid to buy into this online plan of Sega's — spend over \$500 for two years of online service and get a Dreamcast. I think this is stupid for many reasons. First it's a system by Sega. Anyone who has been dealing with video games for a few years knows how Sega is always the first one out of the gate with a new system and then drops it as soon as someone else comes out with a new system. They are signing off the rights to their exclusive games (*Crazy Taxi* and *Zombie Revenge*) and to me that is the first sign of them getting ready to drop the

system. Second, why would I pay for two years of service to someone I don't think will be making new games in one year? Also it's a modem — even if you are lucky enough to live in an area that has fiber-optic lines and can get a full 56K, that's still slow. I run cable on my computer and Sony's PS2 and Nintendo's new system are both going to be broadband. I just don't see how people are going to fall for this.

Ralph Fox

Sorry, but we don't see your point. Although one could take the position that the public at large does not (yet) have enough interest in online gaming to want to sign up for SegoNet, your noisay. "It's a system by Sego," is a silly dig unsupported by facts. True, Sego has made its share of mistakes over the years (perhaps more than its share), but it currently shows no signs of dropping anything, or introducing anything to supplant Dreamcast — no add-ons, no peripherals, no new system specs, nothing. Nor has Sego signed off rights to any games (with the exception of *Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram*); both *Crazy Taxi* and *Zombie Revenge* were released domestically as first-party titles — which even a cursory examination of the games' cases on a store shelf would reveal (assuming you can read as well as write).

Also, even if 56K is "slow," it's still adequate for most console titles, and more importantly, it's available now (or will be within a scant few months of your reading this). This is something that can't be sold of Sony and Microsoft's broadband networks, which could be years away — and for the record, Nintendo currently has no announced online strategy at all, either in broad or narrowband. Further, online consumers are quite used to signing one or two year service contracts in exchange for freebies (AOL being just one example). Will SegoNet achieve success? Not being able to see into the future, we haven't a clue (and hey if we could, do you think we'd have this job?). But if it fails, it won't be for lack of effort and support on Sego's part.

What a rip!

In NextGen 06/00, you had a large article in which gave a lot of information about the new game *Freelancer*. You stated that it had, "A unique universe that is awesome in both size and scope." This game is nothing more than a cheap rip-off of the 1996 Ambrosia shareware game, *Escape Velocity*, which had everything that is included in *Freelancer*, from the ability to land on planets, get missions, and jump to various worlds using the jump drive, to being a pirate or trader, also in a massive universe! The only difference is the unique graphics. Shame on this game and the creators for leeching off of shareware games, and NextGen for writing this article.

Sean Steuer

We hate to burst such a righteous bubble, but we could point out that *Escape Velocity* is in turn nothing more than a "rip-off" of the 1985 Commodore 64 game *Elite*, which also let you "land on planets, get missions, jump to various worlds," and become a "pirate or trader, also in a massive universe." The only difference, of course, being the updated graphics. And let's not forget that *Elite*, in turn, is an obvious "rip-off" of the *Star Wars* universe, which itself was a "rip-off" of dozens of space opera novels of the '40s and '50s, which not only ripped each other off ad nauseum, but were also "rip-offs" of Greek myths... Do we get the picture here?



■ FREELANCER

■ If *Freelancer* is a "rip-off," then by that argument so is just about every work of art/literature/game/movie since the dawn of civilization

→ I was reading NextGen 06/00, and on page 78 it said that *Fear Effect: Retro Helix* is on PlayStation, but when I checked on page 49 it said it was on PlayStation 2. Did my eyes deceive me or were you mistaken? You should hire someone to check if everything is exactly right.

"Robert"

No, we were mistaken on page 49 — it should have been listed as PlayStation, not PlayStation

2. To underscore the difference between "one" and "two" we've summarily removed one finger from the editor's right hand, and two from his left. Unfortunately, this kind of typo spotting is usually the job of Next Generation's managing editor, a position which has remained largely unfilled since the departure of Ms Sarah Ellermon three issues ago. We strive, but there are only so many of us.



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→ Retroview

August 1981

America's favorite yellow ball gets a girlfriend

→ In 1981, it seemed as if there was no end to the financial growth in the game industry. Still, it was not well for market leader Atari, who at the time made up 75 percent of the console market. Following Activision's example, another group of Atari designers would leave the company during the year. Their new company, IMagic, would produce classic 2600 games like *Demon Attack*, *Cosmic Ark*, and *Atlantis*.

Meanwhile, Pac-mania spread across the nation, drawing millions into arcades to feed quarters into Namco's popular machines. Seeing the success that Pac-Man had brought, and knowing that Namco's sequel was still in development, Midway (Pac-Man's distributor in the US) began looking for ways to further cash in.

Their solution came from two programmers at General Computer Corporation (GCC), who'd created a game called *Crazy Otto* by modifying



■ One of few sequels to improve upon the original, *Ms Pac-Man* came from Midway, not from Namco.

Pac-Man arcade boards. GCC added several features to the game, including improved AI and in-game cut-scenes. After signing a deal with GCC for the rights to *Crazy Otto*, Midway made some modifications, and released the game as *Ms Pac-Man*. Today, GCC makes printers.

Cosmos: Atari's bleeding-edge holographic console revealed!

→ NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

WHAT A WOMAN!

MS PAC-MAN

Exclusive Preview: the most important sequel OF ALL TIME

PLUS!

- *Demon Attack*
- *Cosmic Ark*
- *Atlantis*

32+ GAMES REVIEWED

ATARI ■ INTELLIVISION ■ ARCADE ■ ODYSSEY ■ ASTROCADE ■ APPLE ■

What we were playing

Pac-Man was king, but he wasn't alone:

■ FROGGER



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Sega/Konami

■ ASTEROIDS



■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Atari

■ DONKEY KONG



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Nintendo

■ KAROOHI



■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Activision

■ GALAGA



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Namco

1981 Saturday Morning TV

8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
CBS: Tom and Jerry	Bugs Bunny/Road Runner		Tarzan/Lone Ranger	
NBC: Godzilla	Hong Kong Phooey	Flintstones	Duffy Duck	
ABC: Superfriends	Fonz	Richie Rich	Scooby and Scrappy Doo	Thundarr



...and in the real world

■ On August 1, fledgling television network MTV commences operation with its broadcast of the Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star" music video. Believe it or not, the network originally broadcast nothing but music videos.

■ The Space Shuttle Columbia enters active service on April 12, lifting off at 7 a.m. from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. The mission is considered a complete success, but some 164 heat shield tiles are lost or damaged during atmospheric re-entry.

■ Minutes after Ronald Reagan takes the oath of office to become the U.S.A.'s 48th President, 52 American hostages are freed from a 644 day-long imprisonment in Iran.

■ A deranged John Hinckley Jr. opens fire on President Ronald Reagan, wounding both the President and Press Secretary James Brady in an attempt to gain the love of actress Jodie Foster. Evidently, replicating Van Gogh's ear-sliding trick would have been too derivative.

■ In the most watched wedding in history, Lady Diana Spencer becomes the wife of Prince Charles of Wales. The "Royal Wedding" would be followed by the "Royal Separation" in 1992, and the "Royal Divorce" in 1996.

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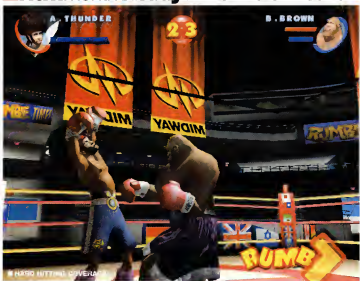
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BackwardsCompatible

Last issue: no five star games. This issue: we give five stars to a game that comes with reakin' maracas. What's going on here? Page 90. **You know, it's always fun until someone bursts into a huge fireball and a pile of flaming wreckage.** Page 60. Ushering in the "golden" age of video gaming. Remember to put the seat down. Page 33. **Okay, let's get this straight — an adventure game with no zombies, no Lara, and no dinosaurs, but plenty of mystery! It sounds kind of intelligent.** Hmmm. That's novel. Page 28. Two really great ways to pass the time until *Final Fantasy IX* comes out. Page 92. **For the last time, no. The Lotus Clan does not evolve into flowers.** It says "often capable." They're the exception. Page 45. A new version of the Garden of Eden, huh? Sounds great. You think we could, oh, I dunno, leave the damn SNAKE out of this one, maybe? That'd be nice. Thanks. Page 42. **Well, it's out. Now what will we make fun of? Page 95.** And the "Game With The Most Ridiculous Punctuation in Its Title" award goes to... Page 84. **Of course, we're not mind readers, but we'd guess that right about now, Gary Goodridge is thinking something along the lines of, "Damn. This is gonna hurt."** Page 59. Careful Dreamcast — we don't think that guy's a real doctor. Page 6. **Last time we saw that look on someone's face, they were sitting on ... erm ... never mind.** Page 7. At last! A driving game where we can adjust fluid levels! Page 57. **Based on the title, we kind of thought this was going to be a porn game. But this sounds okay too.** Page 31. Trust us — anarchy already exists online, despite Metallica's best efforts. Page 50. **We considered the feature "20 Games That Will Probably Suck," but this seemed a bit more compelling.** Page 74. Is this game out for every platform yet? We're tired of handing out stars. Page 88. **The old ones are still the best.** Page 80. There'll be more room in your pocket from now on. Find out why. Page 19. **Wait, living rooms don't usually contain sharks! Oh, our landlord is sooo dead.** Page 92. One... Two... Man, that's difficult! Page 101.

NextMonth Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2



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I will not mate outside my species. I will not mate outside my species.
I will not mate outside my species. I will not mate outside my species.
my species. I will not mate outside my species.



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"Don't make me vomit."



"I'm too polite to use that word, so I'll just say, 'Bite me, you baboon-faced ass-scratcher.'"

"I need a middle finger to show you."

2018, 24

IT'S THINKING



